TESTS: Honda NS400R, Kawasaki 454LTD, Honda ATC350X, Harley-Davidson Sportster XLH 883, BMW R80

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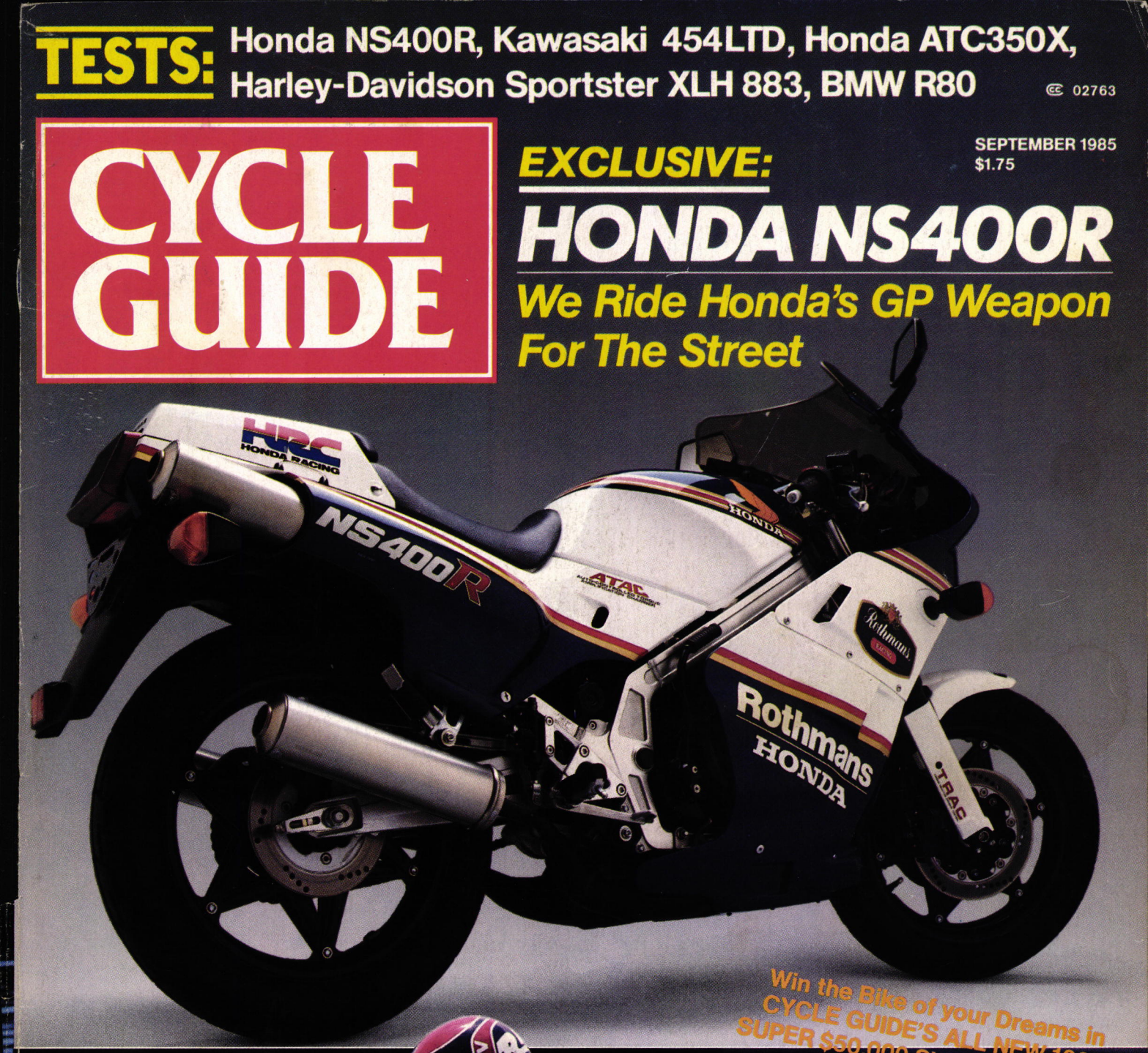

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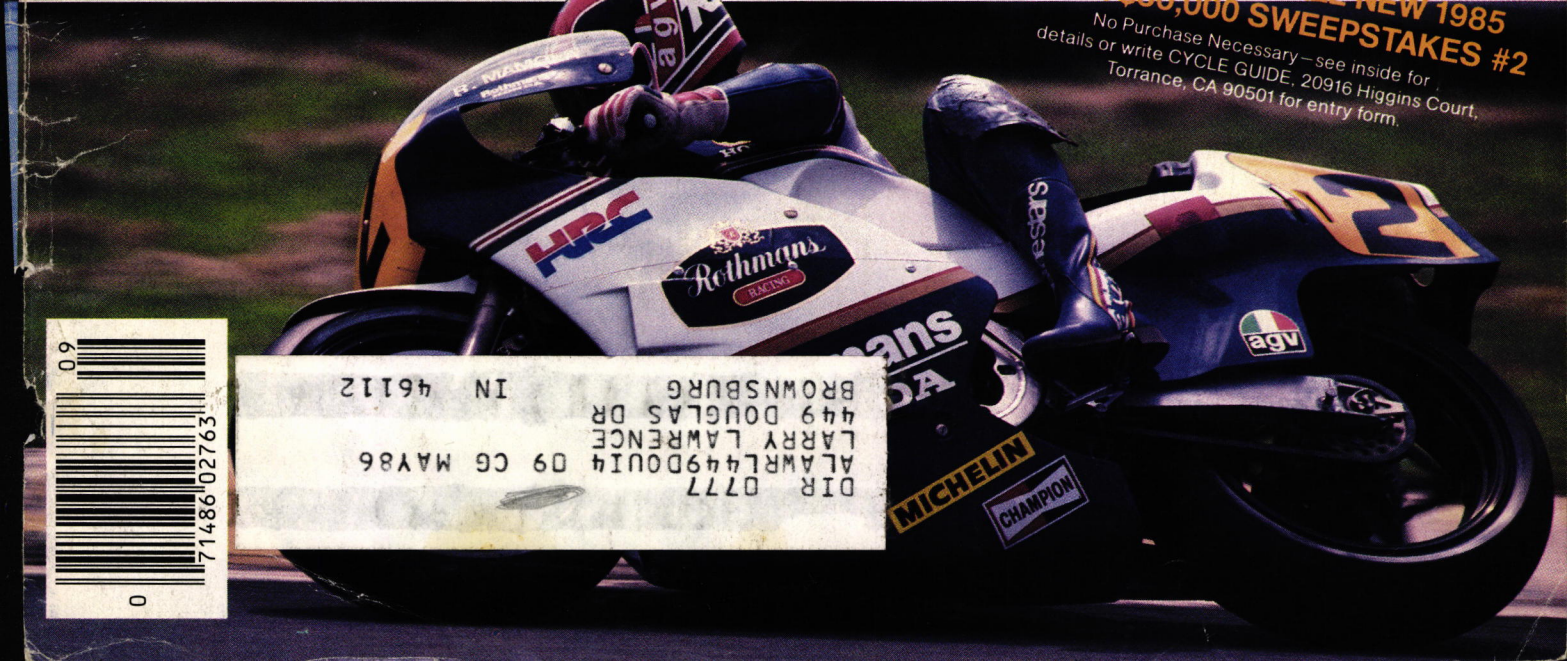

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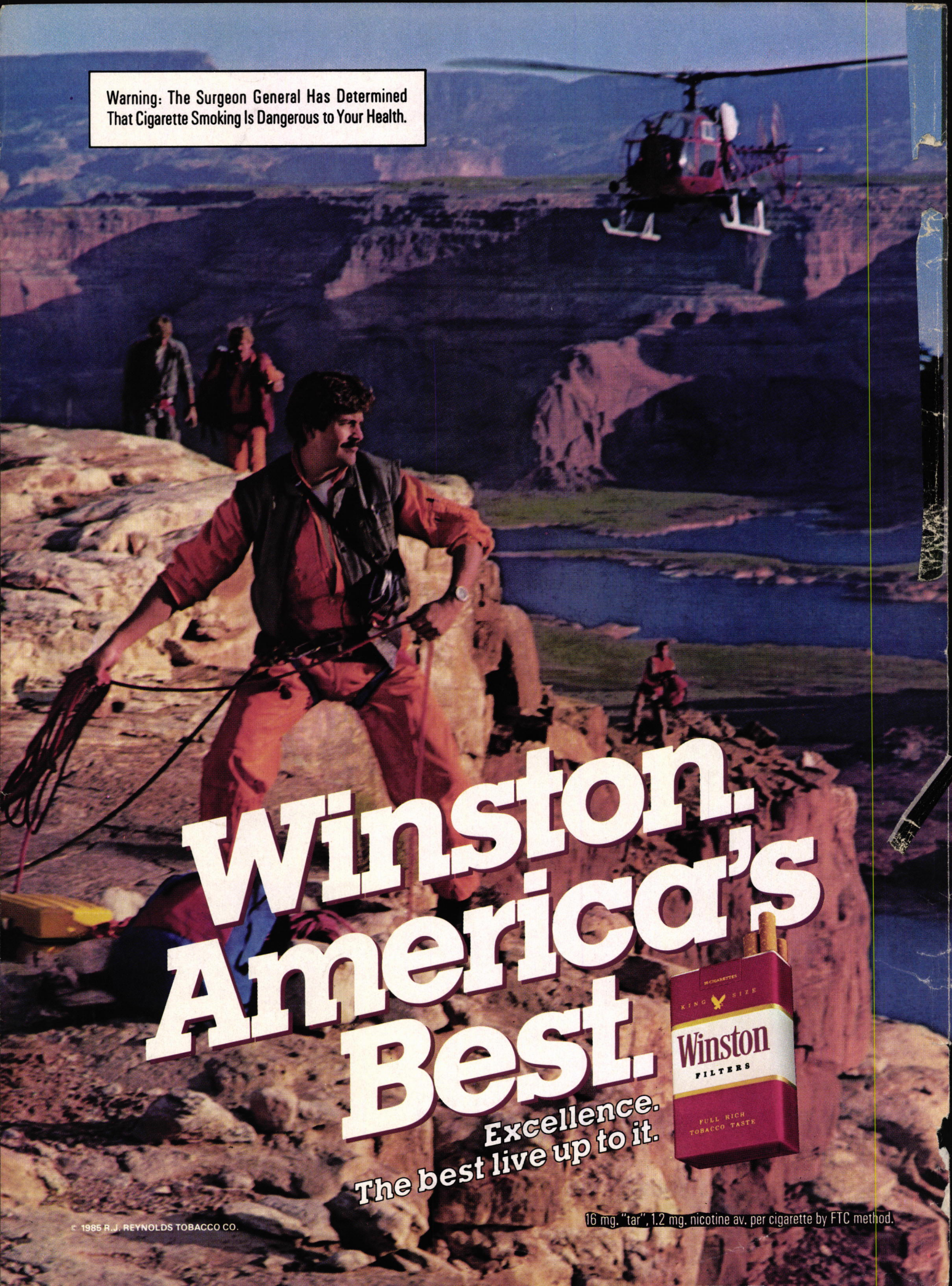
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ON THE COVER: David Dewhurst caught Randy Mamola smoking the rest of the pack on his Rothmans/ Honda NS500, while Vic Huber snapped the street- going NS400R in a rare moment of relaxation, showing off its racetrack curing and exuding its championship- winning aroma. Turn to page 14 for a full-flavor road test of this Rothmans-packaged street smoker.

QUOTE: "On a rough road it will beat you as mercilessly as a New York mugger."
—Pg. 51

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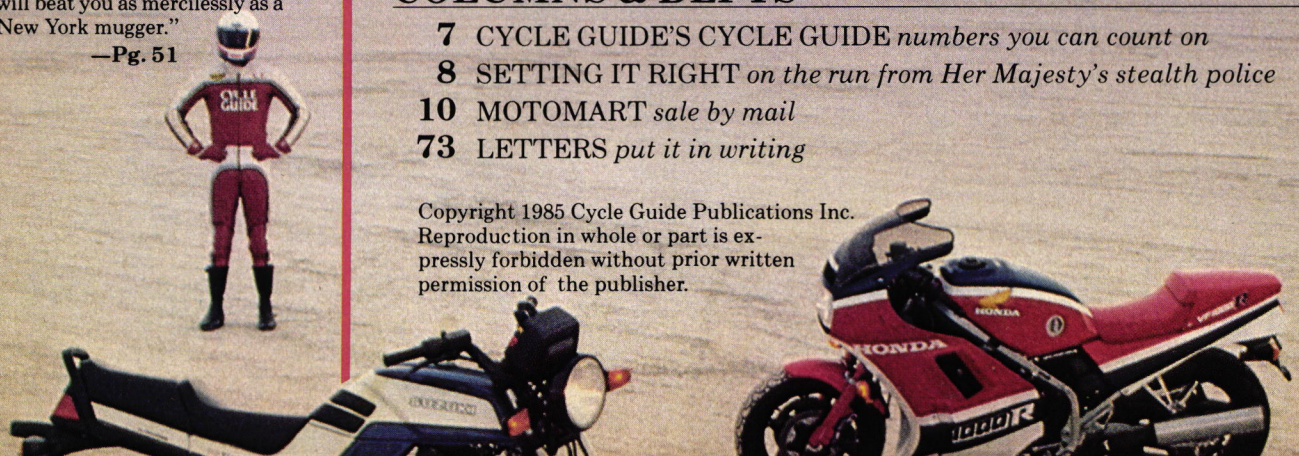

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CYCLE GUIDE'S CYCLE GUIDE

Cycle Guide's catalog of recent test hardware—no brag, just fact

OFF-ROAD

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	TYPE	ENGINE TYPE	WHEEL TRAVEL, IN. FRONT/REAR	WEIGHT, LBS.	RAKE/TRAIL, DEGREES/INCHES	GEARS
Cagiva WRX 250-'84	August '84	Enduro	Two-stroke	11.1/11.6	232	30.0/4.65	6
Cagiva WMX 250-'84	January '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.7	221	28.0/4.65	6
Can-Am 320 Trials-'84	October '84	Trials	Two-stroke	4.8/4.5	205	25.5/3.00	6
Honda ATC250R-'84	May '84	ATV	Two-stroke	8.8/8.0	311	N/A	5
Honda ATC350X-'85	September '85	ATV	Four-stroke	8.0/7.0	324	23.0/1.4	6
Honda CR125R-'84	April '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.2/12.3	195	27.2/4.29	6
Honda CR250R-'84	February '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/12.2	216	26.7/4.13	5
Honda CR500R-'85	February '85	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.6/12.3	232	27.5/4.41	5
Honda XR200R-'84	August '84	Enduro	Four-stroke	9.9/9.6	235	26.0/4.13	6
Honda XR350R-'83	June '83	Enduro	Four-stroke	10.9/10.4	253	26.0/3.94	6
Honda XR500R-'83	October '83	Desert	Four-stroke	11.0/12.2	278	25.5/3.94	5
Husqvarna 250WRX-'85	August '85	Enduro	Two-stroke	11.8/12.5	239	27.0/4.72	6
Husqvarna 400WR-'84	July '84	Enduro	Two-stroke	11.0/11.2	242	28.5/5.16	6
Husqvarna 500CR-'85	April '85	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.9	235	27.0/4.72	4
Husqvarna 510TE-'85	March '85	Enduro	Four-stroke	10.6/11.9	263	28.5/5.16	6
Kawasaki KDX200-'84	August '84	Enduro	Two-stroke	10.0/10.9	214	28.0/4.76	6
Kawasaki KX125-'84	April '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/12.2	195	27.5/4.57	6
Kawasaki KX250-'84	February '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.6/12.3	220	28.5/4.65	5
Kawasaki KX500-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/11.9	232	29.0/4.80	5
Kawasaki KXT250 Tecate-'84	May '84	ATV	Two-stroke	8.6/8.2	319	N/A	5
Kawasaki KLR600-'84	September '84	Dual-purpose	Four-stroke	9.2/8.3	322	29.5/4.80	5
Maico 490 Spider-'83	May '83	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.2	240	27.0/4.72	4
M-Star 250 Supercross-'84	Nov./Dec. '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.7/12.7	230	27.0/4.72	5
Suzuki Quadracer 250-'85	May '85	ATV	Two-stroke	7.2/8.1	326	N/A	5
Suzuki Quadrunner 250-'84	October '84	ATV	Four-stroke	1.0/N/A	384	N/A	5
Suzuki RM125-'85	May '85	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.4/11.8	202	29.0/4.84	6
Suzuki RM250-'84	February '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.8/12.9	220	27.8/4.41	5
Yamaha BW200-'85	April '85	Trail	Four-stroke	6.3/6.6	249	27.3/3.46	5
Yamaha IT200-'84	August '84	Enduro	Two-stroke	10.0/10.6	211	28.0/4.53	6
Yamaha TY350-'85	July '85	Trials	Two-stroke	6.5/4.8	193	23.0/1.93	6
Yamaha XT250-'84	Nov./Dec. '84	Dual-purpose	Four-stroke	9.7/7.9	266	28.3/4.60	6
Yamaha YZ125-'84	April '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.9/12.3	194	27.7/4.57	6
Yamaha YZ250-'85	June '85	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.5/12.3	219	28.0/4.69	5
Yamaha YZ490-'84	June '84	Motocross	Two-stroke	11.3/12.7	227	28.5/4.72	4

STREET

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	ENGINE TYPE*	DISPLACEMENT, CC	QUARTER-MILE, SEC./MPH	TOP SPEED, MPH	WEIGHT, LBS.	FUEL CONSUMPTION, MPG	STOPPING DISTANCE FROM 60 MPH, FT.
BMW K100RS-'84	October '84	4I/G	987.2	12.381/109.48	133	532	39–54	139
BMW R80-'85	September '85	2C/G	782.5	13.357/98.36	114	439	37–52	148
BMW R100RS-'84	October '84	2C/G	979.9	13.425/95.84	111	506	45–57	163
H-D FLTC Tour Glide-'84	March '84	45 deg. 2D/F	1337.7	14.603/88.75	107	774	39–54	152
H-D FXRS Low Glide-'84	January '84	45 deg. 2D/F	1337.7	13.917/94.57	112	575	38–48	140
H-D FXRT Sport Glide-'85	October '84	45 deg. 2D/H	1337.7	14.180/90.36	92	640	28–51	126
H-D XLH 883 Sportster-'86	September '85	45 deg. 2D/F	882.9	14.045/92.40	106	467	37–67	131
H-D XLH Sportster-'85	February '85	45 deg. 2D/F	997.6	13.742/95.94	111	490	43–58	146
Honda Gold Wing Ltd Ed.-'85	March '85	4C/G	1181.9	13.346/98.36	113	810	37–45	134
Honda NS250R-'85	May '85	90 deg. 2D/F††	249.3	13.091/101.58	121	339	27–38	135
Honda NS400R-'85	September '85	90 deg. 3D/F††	387.4	12.410/107.77	122	392	23–38	135
Honda VF500F Interceptor-'84	July '84	90 deg. 4D/F	497.6	12.484/106.00	126	419	33–48	123
Honda VF700C Magna-'85	August '85	90 deg. 4D/G	698.9	12.390/108.82	128	520	34–47	131
Honda VF700F Interceptor-'84	October '84	90 deg. 4D/F	698.9	12.323/106.50	124	512	37–48	136
Honda VF700S Sabre-'85	January '85	90 deg. 4D/G	698.9	12.358/109.09	121	514	28–48	136
Honda VF1000R-'85	July '85	90 deg. 4D/F	998.4	11.308/121.78	149	578	20–42	135
Honda VT1100C Shadow-'85	June '85	45 deg. 2D/G	1099.2	13.022/100.33	112	560	33–44	127
Honda V65 Magna-'85	February '85	90 deg. 4D/G	1098.0	11.440/118.42	142	566	34–46	133
Kawasaki 454 LTD-'85	September '85	2A/H	454.1	13.386/97.08	102	427	37–53	125
Kawasaki GPz550-'85	March '85	4A/F	553.8	12.478/104.89	121	432	44–54	137
Kawasaki GPz750-'84	May '84	4A/F	739.0	12.114/110.97	135	502	37–47	120
Kawasaki GPz1100-'84	May '84	4A/F	1089.9	11.312/120.80	145	560	24–48	120
Kawasaki Eliminator-'85	April '85	4A/G	908.2	11.405/117.49	134	569	22–41	131
Kawasaki Ninja-'85	August '85	4A/F	908.2	11.175/123.79	151	535	32–41	131
Kawasaki Ninja 600R-'85	March '85	4A/F	592.6	12.124/109.09	135	448	40–48	135
Laverda RGS 1000-'84	December '83	3A/F	980.8	12.565/106.50	130	556	25–40	140
Suzuki GS550ES-'85	May '85	4A/F	572.3	12.551/106.50	119	447	33–48	133
Suzuki GS700E-'85	January '85	4A/F	699.5	11.978/112.21	125	485	27–53	140
Suzuki GS1150E-'85	June '85	4A/F	1135.4	11.032/121.78	146	529	30–55	138
Suzuki GV700GL Madura-'85	Nov./Dec. '84	82 deg. 4D/G	698.5	13.307/102.15	111	546	23–45	143
Suzuki GV1200GL Madura-'85	February '85	82 deg. 4D/G	1165.9	11.364/117.18	140	576	28–45	131
Suzuki GV1400GD Cavalcade LX-'85	August '85	82 deg. 4D/G	1360.4	12.881/101.12	115	806	24–49	155
Suzuki VS700GLF Intruder-'85	July '85	2D/G	699.7	12.998/101.01	112	442	44–63	132
Yamaha FJ1100-'85	April '85	4A/F	1097.6	11.002/123.28	147	543	30–47	138
Yamaha FZ750-'85	June '85	45 deg. 4A/F	749.6	11.317/118.57	140	485	31–50	129
Yamaha Maxim X-'85	May '85	4A/G	697.3	11.779/113.63	121	505	25–47	135
Yamaha RZ350-'84	July '84	2A/F††	347.4	13.529/97.61	111	357	26–53	122
Yamaha RZ500-'84	September '84	4D/F††	499.7	12.053/112.64	136	439	25–37	N/A
Yamaha Venture Royale-'84	March '84	70 deg. 4D/G	1197.6	12.759/101.46	124	752	37–53	137
Yamaha V-Max-'85	May '85	70 deg. 4D/G	1197.6	10.922/127.47	151	596	23–32	137

*__A__-Transverse, __B__-Vertical (single-cylinder only), __C__-Horizontally Opposed, __D__-Tandem Vee, __E__-Transverse Vee, __F__-Chain Final Drive, __G__-Shaft Final Drive, __H__-Belt Final Drive, __I__-Horizontal Longitudinal; † indicates a calculated top speed; †† indicates a two-stroke engine

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Setting It Right

Rape and Provocation

Of the British, the French, Q-ships and speed traps.

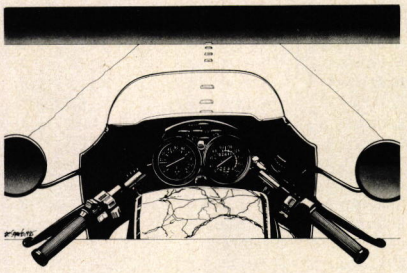
• It was just an ordinary case of speeding, the sort of case Her Majesty's magistrates at Thame in the county of Oxford would deal with in a summary quarter of an hour. But the court had been kept occupied already for two whole hours. The young lady lawyer whom the prosecution had briefed to appear for them was obviously more than weary of the whole thing: She was evidently in despair. She had probably reckoned on 20 minutes at the outside for this one, and was by now supposed to be on her feet in some other court, miles away, arguing another case.

Professionals have to allow a bit of latitude for the accused when, instead of doing the safe thing and engaging counsel, he chooses to defend himself in person. The courts are careful to be seen giving him every opportunity to explain himself, for they are confident of the old lawyers' maxim: "The man who acts as his own lawyer has a fool for a client." But this chap seemed to be doing pretty well. . . .

According to the two policemen who had been patrolling the London-Oxford freeway in an unmarked—but distinctly healthy—vee-six Capri, the accused had been doing 112 mph when they caught up with him—and to do that, they had needed to lash their Ford up to 130 mph, as fast as it would go. A simple enough case, then: Even allowing for errors, he must have been doing more than 100 mph. Everybody knows that to exceed the 70 mph limit by that much is not only to be sure of a hefty fine but also to invite disqualification from driving for a year. Defending the case just goads the courts into imposing a stiffer fine, as punishment for wasting their time; they still exercise their discretion as automatically as ever, and take your license and your money. If you are a motorcyclist, they simply take less time doing it.

The trouble was, this chap—this frail graybeard with the elegant fingernails and a lawyer's language—did not look like a motorcyclist, and sounded even less like one. He had been arguing them from exasperation to exhaustion for two solid hours, and only now did the prosecution lady take her final turn at questioning him. Wearily, she rose to her feet.

"Mr. Setright, your machine is capable, is it not, of exceeding the 70 mph speed limit?" How subtle could she be?



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The lips of a strange woman drop honey, but the wormwood bitterness is scarcely concealed. The court had already seen photographs, adduced in evidence, revealing a motorcycle that looked as though it was doing 100 even when it was standing still. The accused elevated an eyebrow to acknowledge her question, then turned to address the lay magistrates wilting on the bench.

"Certainly it can exceed that limit. It can exceed it twice over, and still have 15 mph in hand. But the possibilities implicit in that physical ability are irrelevant to these proceedings. We are not here to consider what I might have been doing, but for the prosecution to prove, if they can, that I was doing what they allege I was doing. Were it otherwise, you might just as well be here accusing me of rape, simply on the grounds that I have the necessary apparatus."

The three magistrates sat up with such concerted shock that they appeared to rise 6 inches from their seats. Perhaps they did; it was a good line, one that I have ever since been proud to have delivered. Three years have passed, and still I recall it verbatim. Now I pass it on to you, with the recommendation that if your case can be argued, it should be argued. The politicians who cramp us should not think we cannot stretch their shackles; the courts which act like automata should be forced to think.

The Thame court could not be persuaded to doubt that I had been speeding, but they were forced to entertain some misgivings about the case. I was not deprived of my license; my fine was only about one-third of the going rate, and I should like to think I paid it with good grace. It served me right, I thought, for going so slowly; had I maintained the 130 mph cruising speed my Dresda-CBX made so easy, those *agents provocateurs,* those professional traffic-blighters in their Q-ship, would never had caught me.

As the language of the term implies, it was the rascally French who invented the *agent provocateur.* I have to tread as delicately as Agag here, and hope to avoid his grisly fate, for whatever else they think of each other, I know that the French and Americans hold each other's revolution in mutual esteem. Nevertheless, the French technique of sending plainclothes agents to mix with groups of suspects and incite them to acts for which they could then be arrested and punished (preferably terminally) was reprehensible. It is no less so when the British police do it on the Queen's highway.

In all my time living in the Land of the Free, I never saw anything of the kind happen. Perhaps it does, in criminal circles; however, the American highway police do not treat traffic offenders as criminals, but rather as stupid children who deserve to be deprived of their pocket money.

Not all British police are to be tarred with the same brush, but there are some who prefer to treat all motorists as criminals, and to stay away from the real rogues who promise much more trouble and much less fun. The technique is to use an unmarked car and mix with traffic on one of the many roads which are obviously safe for much higher speeds than the law allows. A motorcycle or a sports car draws them as nectar draws a bee, but any driver looking lively will do. By subtle provocation—drawing close, backing off, drawing close again, making as if to overtake and then falling back again—the police car gives the impression that it is either in an unscrupulous hurry or that it wants to play racer.

Any sensible driver—and especially any motorcyclist, who is only safe when well clear of other vehicles—will respond by breaking away and making for clear road ahead, where the mysterious car can go past, if that is what it really wants. Breaking away like that means going faster than the rest, who are already cruising at or around the legal limits. As soon as the police are content that their victim is going fast enough for their purposes, they strike. Concealed lights flash, police signs are raised at the windows, and yet another potential rapist is waved in to the roadside.

The problem is growing, and I suspect some American forces are about to employ the same methods. Some were taking delivery of suitable high-performance cars for mufti operation, just about the time I left. If yours really is the Land of the Free, prepare to defend yourselves! —*L.J.K. Setright*

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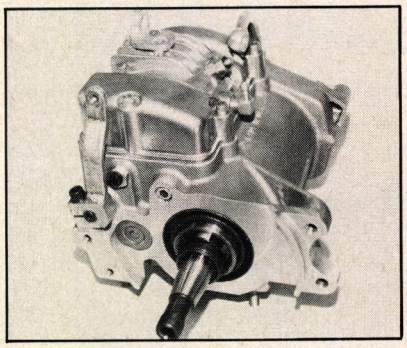
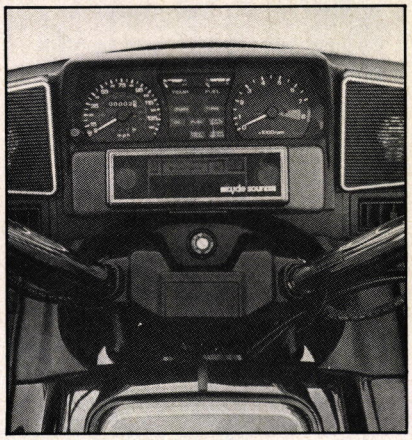


Bodyguard for Racers: No, this isn't the kind of bodyguard that wards off eager autograph hounds and pesky paparazzi. 3-D Sports' Body-Gard offers a different kind of protection, in a suit with resilient padding at the sides, back, shoulders and elbows. 3-D claims the Body-Gard's material keeps the rider cool and allows freedom of movement, and the machine-washable suit has a suggested retail price of $59 for adult sizes and $53 for youth sizes. To find out more, contact 3-D Sports Ltd., Dept. CG, Elm and Albemarle streets, York, Pennsylvania 17403.



Hear Ye Hear Ye: Sometimes the song of the open road, sweet as it is, can get a little monotonous. Cycle Sound has the solution to that dilemma, though, with its new sound system for 1984–85 Honda Gold Wing Interstates. The system uses Clarion's Audia Hybrid radio, the speaker grilles and radio cover are finished in gold trim, and the complete unit has a suggested retail price of $463.46. It's available from your dealer or from Cycle Sound, Dept. CG, P.O. Box 41, Bulverde, Texas 78163.

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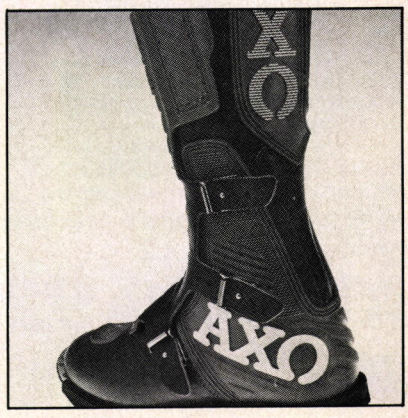

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ROAD TEST:

Honda NS400R

A Spencer replica that even Freddie can't buy in his home town.

BY JIM MILLER

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 DAVID DEWHURST

For some sportbike enthusiasts, nothing less than a racebike with lights qualifies as a *pur sang* sporting device. For those aficionados, the claim, "What works on the track, works on the street," has become gospel, and racetrack breeding is one of their requirements of a sportbike's pedigree. Based on that thinking, Honda's NS400R might be the weapon of choice for such discriminating tastes, because from its vee-three motor and aluminum frame to its gold-trimmed, red-white-and-blue livery, the bike appears to be a dead ringer for Honda's NS500 GP machine. The NS400 even sports the same Rothmans and Honda Racing Corp. decals on its fairing and tail section.

And the connection between streetbike and racebike carries over to their style of performance, too. Just as Honda's GP Triple was able to surprise a lot of higher horsepower hardware, this undersized GP replica can put the moves on bikes half again its size. Half-liter middle-

Continued

weights aren't safe from the NS, and Yamaha's RZ350, the only street-legal, two-stroke racebike-replica available in the United States, seems a mere paddock impostor by comparison. In fact, when the NS's tach needle sweeps past 7500 rpm, the liquid-cooled two-stroke wails out enough horsepower to whip the RZ by more than a second in the quarter-mile and by 11 mph in top speed. And those bikes the NS can't simply outrun, it will out-handle, or at least wind up snapping at their heels like an ill-tempered Yorkshire terrier.

Yet despite the NS's high level of performance, Honda doesn't claim the NS400R is a thinly disguised and civilized GP bike—only that "the concept" for the streetbike comes from Honda's racing program. The differences between the vee-three two-stroke Freddie Spencer rode to his 500cc world championship in 1983 and this three-cylinder sporter are as numerous as the regulations keeping the 400 away from U.S. shores. In fact, once you get past the basic specifications, the two motors part company with little more than a cursory nod: The GP machine uses a 110 degree vee spread, with the center cylinder facing forward and down, and the two outer cylinders nearly upright. It would be difficult to duplicate that arrangement on a sportbike, because the exhaust pipes for the upright, rearward-facing cylinders would leave little room for the battery, oil tank and other streetbike ancillaries. Consequently, Honda's designers reversed the 500's engine layout on the NS400R. Instead of the racer's one-down, two-up configuration, Honda's GP replica hits the streets of Japan, Italy, England, Germany and France with a 90 degree vee spread, using a one-up, two-down cylinder arrangement, with the two outer cylinders almost horizontal and the third upright.

The differences between the two triples don't mean the NS400 doesn't have a drop of racing blood in its pedigree; actually, its competition bloodline more closely follows that of the NS500's F2 stablemate, the RS250. In fact, the 400 bears a closer resemblance to the RS250's street-legal counterpart, the NS250R, than it does to the company's 500 GP racing hardware. The two street motors not only have the same 90 degree vee spreads, but the stroke dimensions are identical (50.6mm), and bore sizes are within 1mm of one another (57.0mm for the 400, 56.0mm for the 250). Likewise, both street motors breathe through rectangular-slide Keihin carburetors, 28mm for the NS250R, 26mm for the 400.

One feature the NS400R does share with its GP counterpart is Honda's ATAC (Auto-Controlled Torque Amplification Chamber) system. ATAC bolsters low-end and midrange power by increasing the exhaust-system volume within a certain rpm range, which allows Honda's engineers to configure the expansion chambers for peak power at high rpm. Below 7500 rpm, a butterfly valve downstream of the exhaust port for each of the front two cylinders routes the exhaust gas through a small chamber between each cylinder and its header pipe. As the revs climb past that speed, an ignition sensor signals a solenoid, which closes the butterfly valves via a linkage.

And 7500 rpm is exactly where the NS hits its howling, hard-charging powerband; at that point, the vee-three's power comes on with a vengeance. Lofting the front wheel in the lower two gears requires nothing more than twisting your wrist, and from 7500 rpm to its 10,750-rpm redline, the 392-pound NS squirts ahead with enough authority to humble most middleweights in a heads-

up contest. In fact, the NS's 12.410-second, 107.77-mph quarter-mile not only betters Honda's own VF500F Interceptor, it also outdrags Yamaha's FJ600 and comes within 0.3 second of Kawasaki's Ninja 600R. The 400 even can blow off a lot of bigger bikes if their pilots are caught napping, and carries enough of a wallop to illustrate that the racebike's concept—if not the hardware—is intact.

Such performance, however, doesn't mean the NS needs to be whipped into a bug-eyed frenzy to make any progress. Although some hot-rod two-strokes don't make enough power at low rpm to peel gum off a hot sidewalk, the 400 doesn't require a half a block of clutch slipping to get away from stoplights. Moreover, the vee-three is perfectly content to burble along well below its powerband, and it's only when the engine is held near 7500 rpm that the 400 betrays any high-strung behavior, as it begins to buck and lurch like a thoroughbred strapped to a plow. The NS prefers to be kept on the boil, but even if you drop out of the powerband, the two-stroke has sufficiently strong midrange to keep it from falling flat on its face.

The motor's forgiving nature is particularly important on extremely tight roads, where the gap between first and second gears can sometimes force you to choose between letting the engine struggle in second, fanning the clutch or pulling a quick downshift to keep the triple wailing. Fortunately, the other gears seem well matched to the engine's power, and the crisp-shifting transmission and light, progressive clutch-actuation make it easy to keep the NS on the fly.

In fact, apart from the gap between first and second, everything about the NS seems perfectly configured for flying down canyon roads. For example, the NS's rapid steering response and light weight make it easy to pitch the bike into corners with relative abandon, and changing lines in midcorner requires little more than a light push on the clip-on handlebars. That nimbleness, combined with the sticky Dunlop tires, inspire enormous confidence, and the Honda's reassuring handling makes it possible to work the tires right to their edges without touching down *any* chassis parts. And if you come into a corner too hot and need to brake, the NS obliges willingly; the bike shows almost no tendency to resist braking and turning. Consequently, a rider can start braking far later into a corner than he could with a less cooperative motorcycle. Overall, the NS lets you deal with the road on *your* terms, rather than the bike's.

The Honda's depth of ability allows it to complement the expert and accommodate the tyro, permitting either to go fast in complete confidence, even on tight, unpredictable roads.

Such blue-ribbon handling comes from a chassis that, surprisingly enough, offers limited suspension adjustment. With the exception of the four-position TRAC anti-dive, the 400 lacks any kind of external damping adjustment; the fork adjusts for oil volume and air pressure only, and the rear suspension for spring preload. Some might consider the lack of rebound-

Continued

Swathed in HRC and Rothman's decals, the NS400R is a dead-ringer for Honda's NS500

When it comes to performance, the connection is more than visual.

Honda NS400R vs. Honda CBR400F2

Same church, different pews.

• As is the case with skinning cats, there's more than one way to build a 400cc sportbike. The NS400R is a product of the contemporary school of sportbike design, wherein lessons learned on the racetrack appear in street-legal guise. But Honda makes another 400cc sportbike, the CBR400F2. And the CBR's design also is indebted to Honda's GP victories, albeit those in the past, when the company's racebikes were powered by multi-cylinder four-stroke engines that spun to stratospheric rpm.

Those years of experience with high-revving four-strokes are evident throughout the CBR's 399cc engine. For instance, the oversquare air-cooled inline-four uses four valves per cylinder; the small, light valves contribute to the engine's ability to rev to its remarkably high 12,800-rpm redline. High revs traditionally have been Honda's chosen route to power, and in the CBR's case, the quest for peak power is aided by long duration/long overlap camshafts. But such tuning tricks—high revs and radical camshafts—bias power production toward high-rpm operation, imposing a penalty on the low-end and midrange performance. So Honda engineers came up with REV, for Revolution Modulated Valve Control. The REV system is intended to accomplish for the CBR the same basic function ATAC does for the NS; that is, to increase low-end and midrange power.

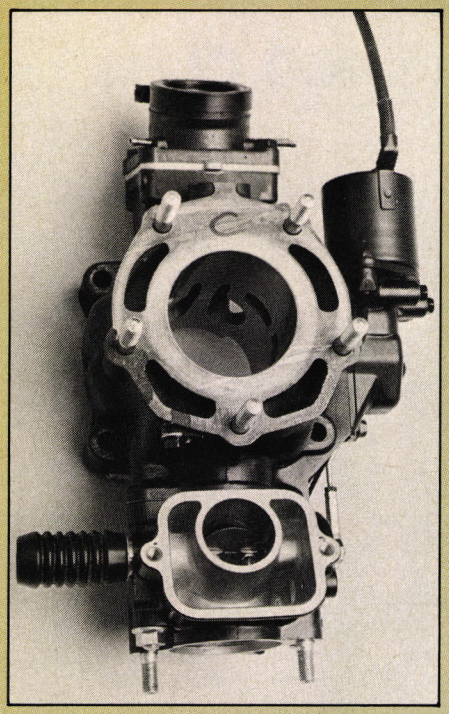
Honda's REV system accomplishes that task by controlling valve actuation according to engine speed. Below 8500 rpm, only one intake and one exhaust valve per cylinder operate; the resultant small port and valve area keep the velocity of the intake charge high, which provides effective cylinder filling. The CBR's cams are designed for peak efficiency at high rpm, though, and full four-valve operation at lower rpm would allow the velocity to drop, with a similar loss of cylinder-filling efficiency—and power. Above 8500 rpm, when the CBR's cam timing hits its stride, a hydraulically actuated pin engages the rocker arms for the second intake and exhaust valve in each cylinder, and from that rpm on, the CBR uses all of its 16 valves.

Yet even at its peak the CBR can't match the NS, which has a broader spread of power and more of it throughout its range. And despite its REV system, the four-stroke is decidely barren of low-end and midrange. As a result, getting the best out of the CBR on backroads means keeping it "on the valves" as much as possible, but that's an extraordinarily difficult task, given the razor's width powerband. Merely rolling off the throttle for a split second in a turn almost automatically calls for a two-downshift exit. And while the CBR rider is paddling frantically at the shift lever, the NS pilot can be using the two-stroke triple's strong midrange and potent top-end power to disappear around the next corner.

A CBR rider won't have to suffer too many of those disappearing acts, though, thanks to the bike's chassis. For example, the CBR feels slightly more eager to initiate a turn than the NS. And although the four-stroke's suspension is biased more toward comfort than the NS's, it's still competent enough to keep the two-stroke triple in sight—provided the rider can keep the cammy four-stroke on the boil. The CBR's softer rebound damping makes it more comfortable than the NS around town or on the freeway, too.

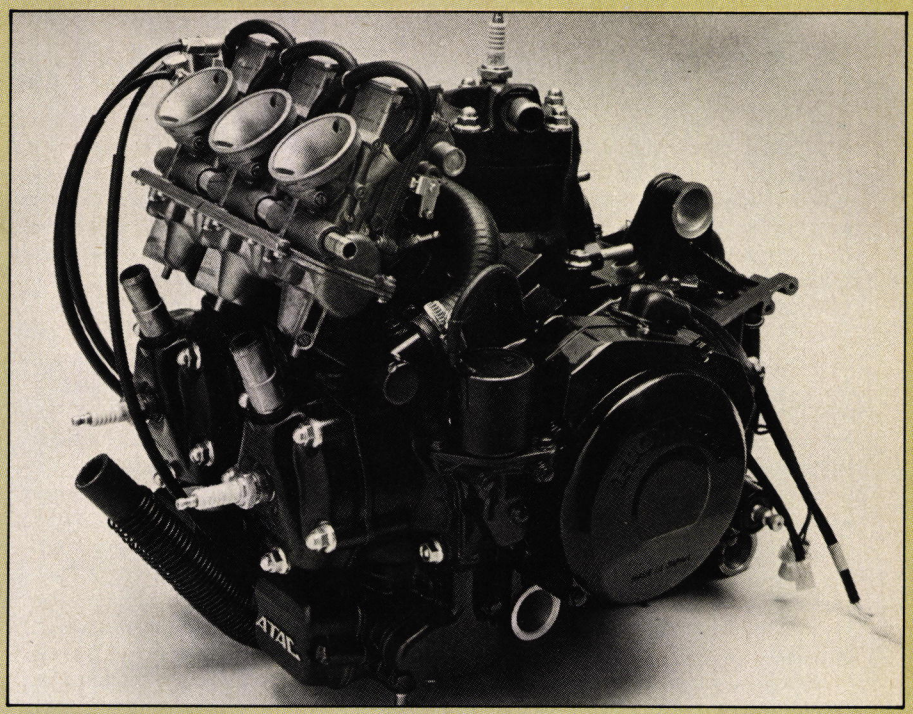
Overall, in fact, the CBR is better suited to life away from the backroads than the NS. In traffic the CBR's shortage of midrange isn't nearly as annoying as the NS's surplus of engine heat, which radiates through the seat and sidecovers despite the heat shielding. The four-stroke's seating position feels less cramped, too, with more room for a passenger or strap-on luggage.

But both of these motorcycles were designed and built for the backroads— admittedly, though, not for American backroads. And judged by their abilities, the verdict is clear: In virtually every category of performance, the CBR comes in second to the NS. The CBR is a streetbike with racebike aspirations, and the NS is a racebike for the street. Even though the CBR400F2 celebrates Honda's past four-stroke tradition and know-how, the past is still the past. The future is here, and it's called the NS400R. —*Jerry Smith*



ATAC butterfly toggles open or closed

To prevent a toggle-switch powerband.



NS400R's two-down/one-up cylinder layout reverses GP bike's design

For the streetbike, Honda exhausted the options.

© 1985 GILBERT LUNA

damping adjustments an unfortunate cost-cutting measure, but they needn't be concerned; the bike simply doesn't need it. Though the spring rates initially seem too soft for high-speed work, the suspension actually works best at the low end of its preload adjustment range. For a 150-pound rider, 2 psi in the fork (Honda recommends 0-6 psi) and 3 turns from full soft on the shock's hydraulic preload adjuster (13 ¼ turns is full hard) are sufficient. At those settings, the bike cuts though fast sweepers with the sureness of a marble through a garden hose, yet refuses to be knocked off-line through bumpy corners. Heavier riders might prefer stiffer preload settings, but otherwise the higher settings at the rear cause the back end to kick up over bumps, and higher air pressure in the fork simply makes the ride harsh.

Increasing fork air pressure does reduce brake dive, however, though not enough to warrant the additional harshness. Also, the 400's TRAC anti-dive seems to do a better job of controlling nose-dive during braking than some of the recent Hondas we've seen. Part of that success is probably due to the NS's light weight, but the fact is the Honda's stunning front brake can stand the NS on its nose during hard braking, and you don't get any greater weight transfer than that. The dual-disc front brake can repeat that performance time and again, too. Even several hard downhill charges

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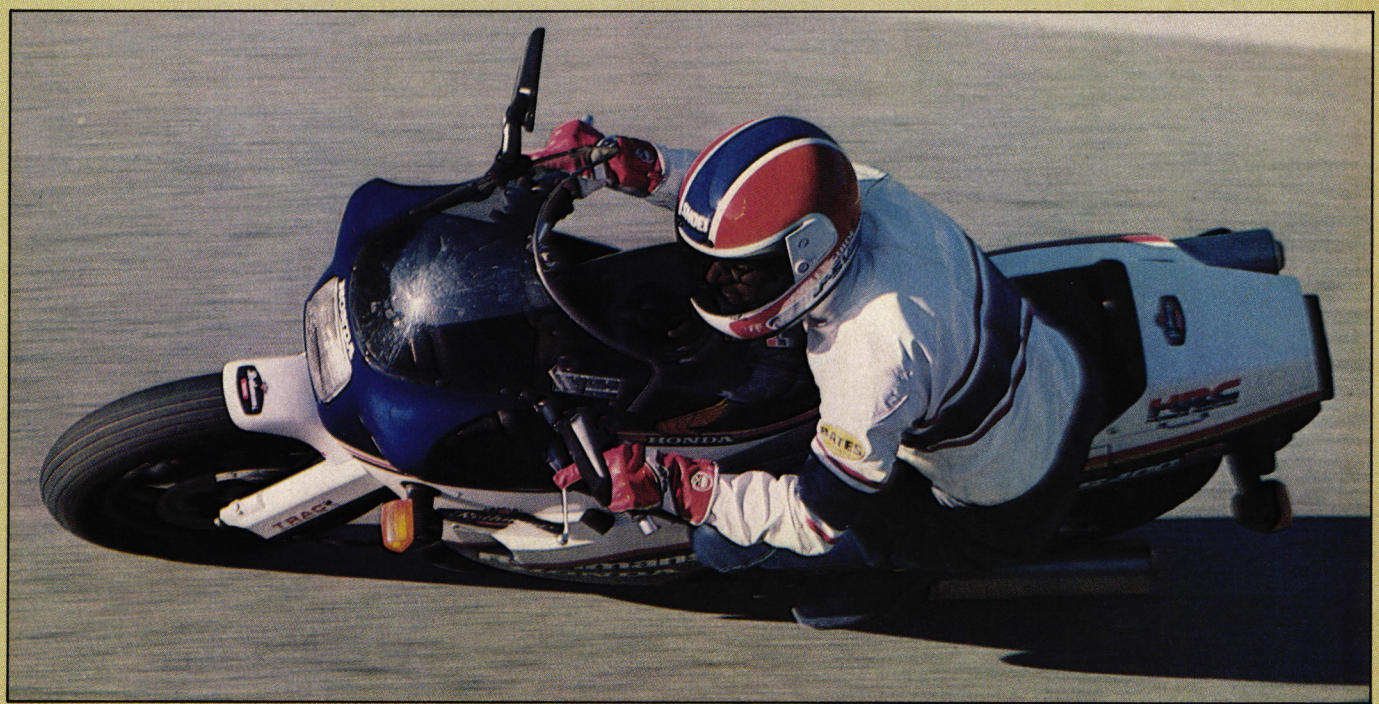


A 10-Year Reunion of Honda's 400 Class

• I've lost a number of things over the past decade: a touch of faith, a bit of hope and some of my hair. But there's one item I've steadfastly refused to part with: my first real streetbike, a 1975 Honda CB400F.

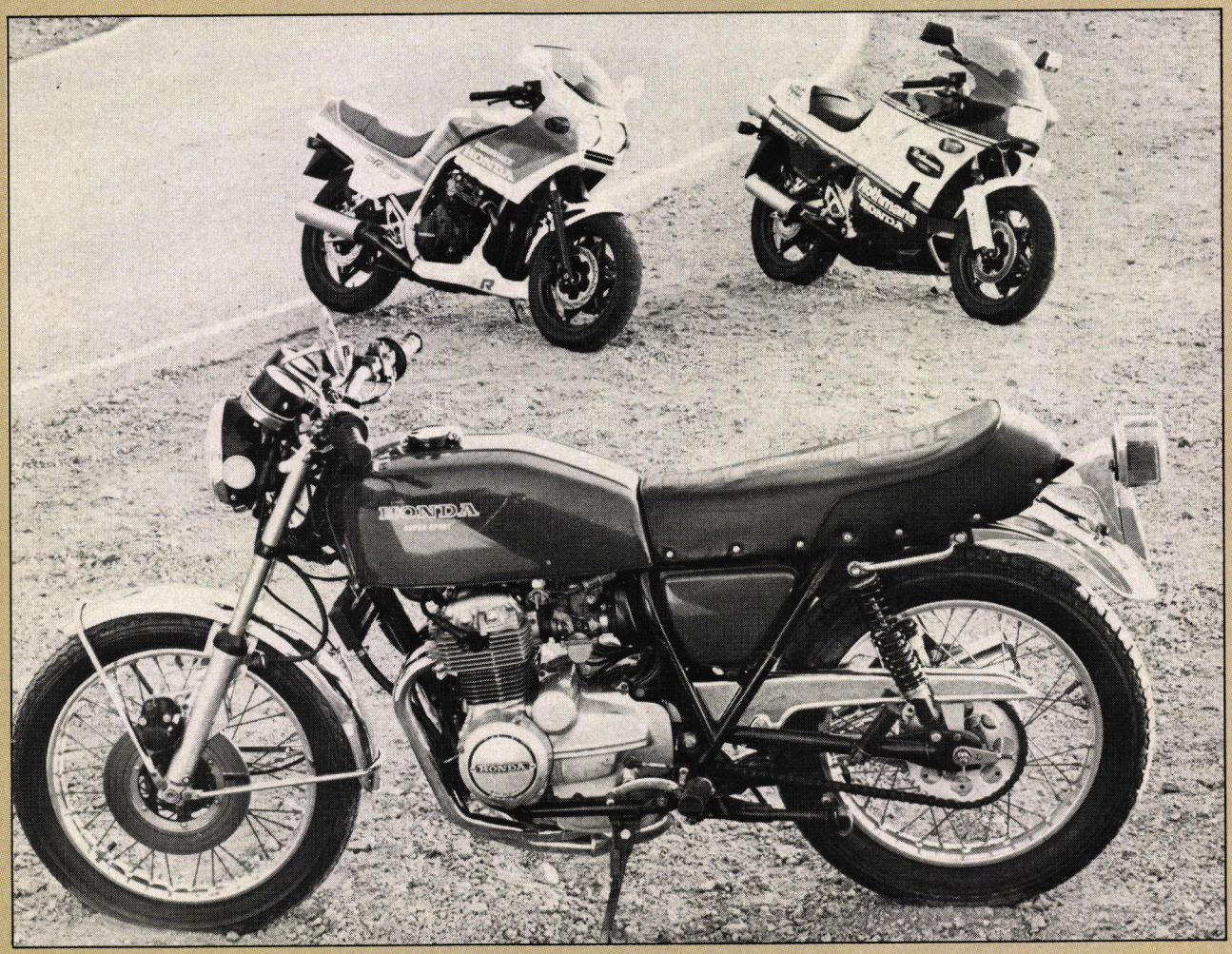
For those who don't remember, the CB400F was—mechanically, anyway—little more than a gussied-up version of Honda's CB350F, which was a dull, slow little bike with a gemlike inline-four engine as its only distinction. Honda kept many of the basic underpinnings for the 400, but installed bigger pistons, a reworked clutch, new suspension, and packaged it all in crisp, clean bodywork. Those few changes transformed the bike, making it one of the few in its day to look like a sportbike—and one of even fewer to deliver real sporting performance. In 1975, the CB400F was a revelation.

It still is in 1985, although one of a completely different sort. Nowadays, riding my 400 evokes a bizarre combination of feelings, of close familiarity and utter foreignness. Everything is just as I remember it from 10 years ago, yet by modern standards the bike seems almost horrifyingly inadequate. It feels slow and twitchy, and the stiff suspension doesn't respond to bumps—at least, not in any useful way. Compared to the slick, swift and sure alumni of Honda's 1985 400 class, the NS400R and CBR400F2, my CB400F feels like a rolling anachronism. But only because it is.

And yet, although I know the CB is slow, ill-handling and rides like a buckboard, the bike has an inescapable, undeniable appeal to me. No, it's no longer in pristine condition, but its battle scars are mine; every mark on it bears testimony to my journey in becoming a motorcyclist. There—those scratches on the dyno cover show the time I unsuccessfully tried to blast through the ess-turn on West Main a gear higher than ever before. That scuffed brake lever and gashed master cylinder cap; those are from when I highsided in traffic on Westheimer. And the burnished spot on the right footpeg's feeler-ball; from the first time I intentionally dragged a peg.

Those are just some of the reasons why I won't ever part with my CB400F—and why another motorcycle can't take its place. Yes, the NS and CBR are measurably, fundamentally better in every way, yet despite their functional superiority, they can't take me to the same places in the heart that the CB can. My 400 isn't just any motorcycle; it's a time machine, one that can transport me back almost anywhere in the last decade; to the times we spent roaring up and down Kirby/Allen Parkway in Houston in the dead of night, and later, on sorties through the Texas hill country.

Such memories are why the old 400 remains precious to me. True, riding something like the NS and CBR can put me squarely in the present, and I can see the CB's flaws with perfect clarity. But my 400 means more to me than those bikes ever will. Because, although people will tell you that you can't go home again, I've found a way. It's just that with my CB400F, it takes me a little longer to do it. —*Charles Everitt*



on a mountain road failed to exhibit any gremlins in the NS's brakes, with no fade or grabbiness, front or rear. And even when hot, both brakes still provide excellent feedback, which makes it easy to gauge point of lockup and allows you to use every bit of stopping power.

Such a phenomenal combination of brakes, handling and power can satisfy even the most demanding members of the duct-tape-and-leathers crowd, but if they expect that backroad prowess to extract some crippling penalty elsewhere, they're mistaken. Despite the bike's small size, the NS is surprisingly comfortable for most riders, because unless you're 6 feet tall or more, the high-mounted footpegs won't cramp your knees, and the seat/handlebar relationship puts you in a comfortable crouch, without placing too much weight on your wrists. Even the saddle seems suitable for all-day rides. Plus, the same softly sprung, well-damped suspension that

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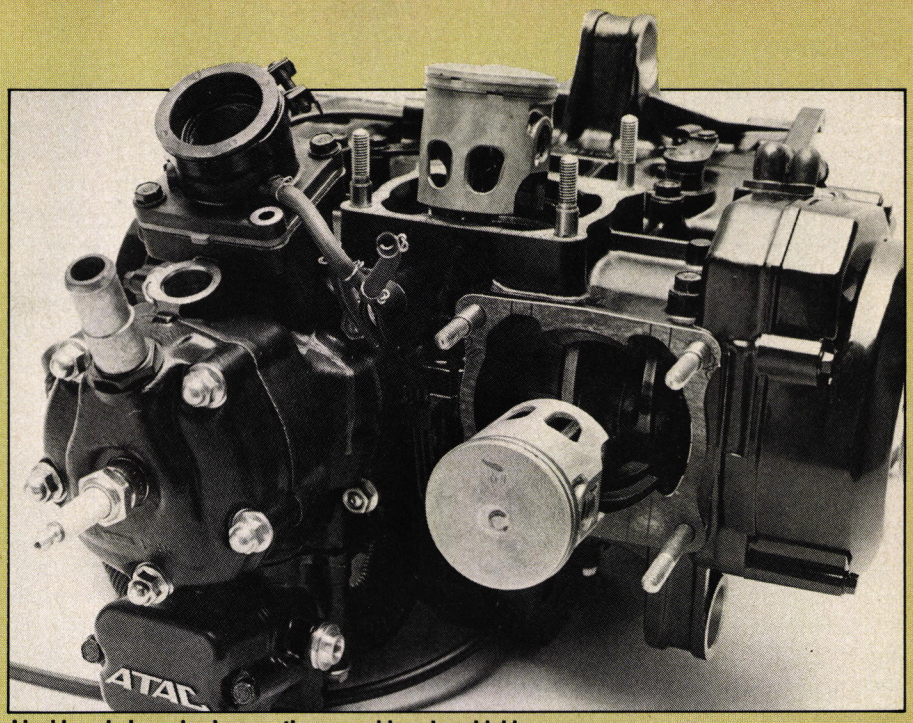
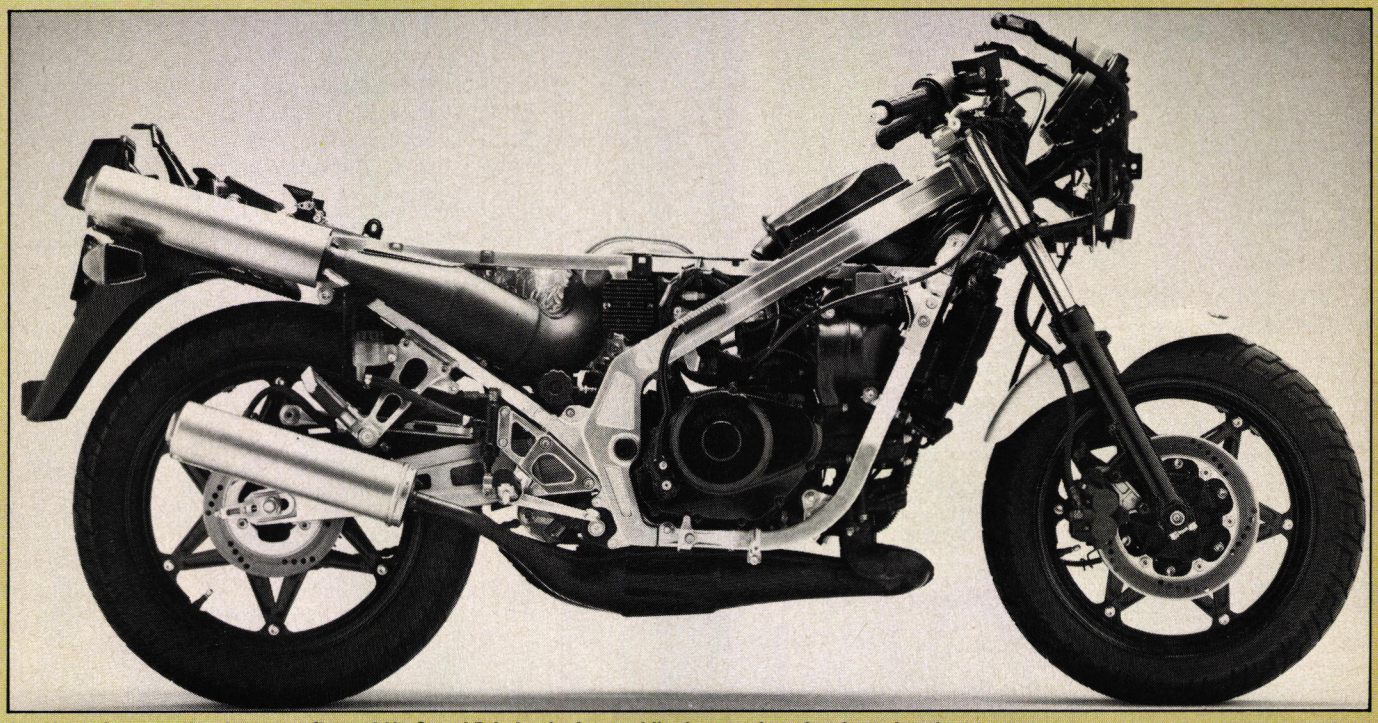


Liquid-cooled, reed-valve vee-three provides class-kicking power

Conventional technology for unconventional results.



Aluminum frame and swingarm reflect 400's Grand Prix beginnings, while the vee-three is adapted to the street

From a 110 degree vee for the racebike to 90 for the street, a right angle is the right angle.

COMPARATIVE TEST DATA:

Make and Model	Quarter-Mile, sec/mph	Top Speed, mph	Weight, lbs.	Stopping Distance From 60 mph, ft.
Honda NS400R-'85	12.410/107.77	122	392	135
Honda CBR400F2-'85	13.742/96.25	117	434	N/A
Honda VF500F-'84	12.484/106.00	126	419	123
Kawasaki Ninja 600R-'85	12.124/109.09	135	448	135
Yamaha RZ500-'84	12.053/112.64	136	439	N/A
Suzuki GS550ES-'85	12.551/106.50	119	447	133

makes the NS so sure-footed on twisting two-lanes also provides a marvelously comfortable ride. With fork air pressure set to 0 psi and rear-spring preload set to 2 turns, the 400 devours most pavement irregularities; even abrupt, sharp-edged bumps or freeway expansion joints fail to upset the Honda's poise.

The motor also adapts well to everyday urban living; it usually starts with one or two prods at the kickstarter, and warms up quickly. The rubber-mounted vee-three won't rattle your fillings loose, either; some vibration filters through the footpegs above 7500 rpm, but it's not intrusive, and the buzzing coming through the grips never gets beyond the level of that generated by a jar full of honeybees. There is, however, one shortcoming in the NS's behavior, and it's the same bugaboo that plagues most liquid-cooled, fully faired motorcycles: engine heat. When you're blasting through the canyons you hardly notice it, but once you're stuck in traffic it feels like someone dropped a hot rock in your lap. Though the heat isn't as bad as on some bikes, it can make you wish for the wide open spaces after a stretch in the stop-and-go urban environment.

But the NS could leave you parboiled like a lobster and it *still* would be worth the ride, strictly on the strength of its apex-clipping ability. Even if you had to keep it chained to your garage floor six days a week, a single day skimming over serpentine blacktop would convince you that it was all worthwhile, because this is a motorcycle that can make bevelled boot toes and duct-taped knees a way of life. And for those riders who think the only route to the street should be through a racetrack paddock, the NS400R has the credentials—both on paper and in fact. It's more than a stunning middleweight; it's one of the most capable sportbikes ever to arc through a sweeper.

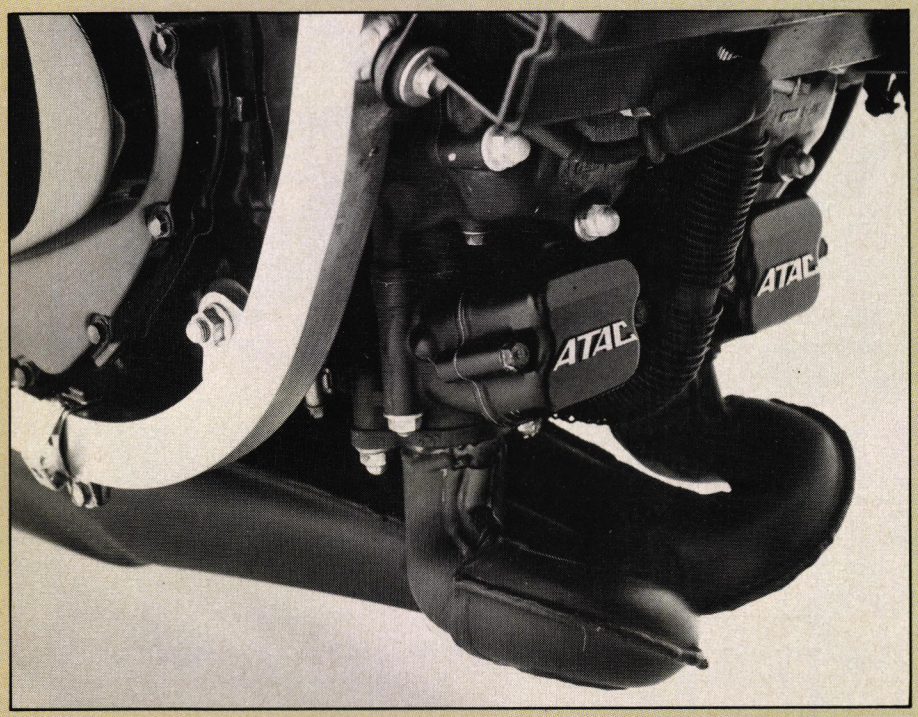
Best of all, though, the NS doesn't suffer from the kind of one-dimensional, narrow-focus stance that can take the glitter off a brilliant sportbike by making it a chore to live with. In fact, the NS is a remarkably complete motorcycle, and one hell of a good streetbike. So while some might lament the fact that Honda didn't simply put lights on Spencer's world championship-winning NS500, we don't—because the NS400R is a better sportbike. What we *do* lament, however, is that you can't get it *here*. •

Nits:

- No permanently attached centerstand, and shop-type centerstand is inconvenient.
- Fork legs are not interconnected for air adjustment.

Picks:

- Grips are soft and comfortable.
- Large-capacity oil tank.
- Knob adjuster for rear spring preload is convenient to use.
- No-maintenance battery.



Auto-controlled Torque Amplification Chamber operates on front cylinders only

Honda's ATAC goes two on one.

Ride Review

- It takes a lot of trouble and expense to bring a non-certified bike like the NS400R into this country, and you've got to ask yourself if it's worth it. After all, the NS is only a 400, and besides, if you so much as knock it off the sidestand and break a clutch lever, there probably isn't a replacement part in this hemisphere. Can this motorcycle, *any* motorcycle, be worth all that bother?

Damn straight. And at the risk of triggering a crime wave of customs violations, I'm here to tell you the NS is worth just about anything you have to do—short of murder—to get one. So what if it's "only" a 400? The way it straightens out twisty roads borders on the supernatural. And I don't care about parts availability—I'd carve clutch levers from billet with my *teeth* if I had to. The NS400R is worth it.

—Jerry Smith

- No one knows how close I came, while riding Honda's NS400R, to . . . not . . . coming . . . back. I was out there on one of my favorite ribbons of two-lane blacktop, having just a grand time, pitching the thing into corners, doing long, high stoppies, and wheelieing out of every first-gear turn I could find. In fact, I was having such a good time that I didn't want to stop. The NS can do that to you, because it's one of those rare, completely responsive motorcycles that executes your every command, quickly and directly, without introducing any variables of its own.

So why did I decide to come back? Conscience, I suppose. But I know one thing: If I'd just kept going, no one could have caught me. At least, not unless they were on another NS.

—Charles Everitt

- When I went out testing on the NS, I had Yamaha's FZ750 along—and that was my first mistake. That's partly because I'm positively in lust with the FZ's engine, and I also enjoy having to participate in herding a bike around corners. I *like* a demanding motorcycle, but I don't get much of a feeling of participation when I ride the NS400R. The Honda is so light and agile that all you really need to do is steer and keep the engine on the pipe.

But for some that might be the NS's saving grace. You see, the 400's engine is not only fast but fairly wide-band, and combines with the plush suspension to make the Honda a genuinely accommodating motorcycle. Considering the NS400R's Rothmans-flavored racebike-replica plumage, I expected—I *wanted*—something much less civilized. Thanks, but for my thrills, I'll take an FZ750.

—Marc Cook

CYCLE GUIDE SPECIFICATIONS

Honda NS400R

street

MANUFACTURER: Honda Motor Co. Ltd., 27-8, 6-chome Jingu-mae, Shibuya-ku, 150 Japan

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: ¥629,000 ($2620)

ENGINE

Type . . . . . liquid-cooled two-stroke 90 degree vee-three
Port arrangement . . . . . one bridged, reed-valve-controlled intake, four main transfers and one exhaust per cylinder
Bore and stroke . . . . . 57.0mm x 50.6mm
Displacement 387.4cc
Compression ratio (corrected) 6.7:1
Engine redline . . . . . 10,750 rpm
Carburetion . . . . . three 26mm Keihin rectangular slide/needle
Air filter . . . . . washable oiled foam element
Lubrication . . . . . oil injection
Starting system . . . . . primary kick
Ignition . . . . . transistorized breakerless
Charging system . . . . . 12-volt; 160-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 4-ampere-hour battery

DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive . . . . . straight-cut gears; 2.481:1 ratio
Clutch . . . . . wet, multi-plate
Final drive . . . . #530 O-ring chain (⅝-in. pitch, ⅜-in. width); 2.500:1 (40/16) ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.500	15.506	4.65
II	1.714	10.631	6.78
III	1.333	8.268	8.72
IV	1.111	6.891	10.46
V	0.965	5.985	12.05
VI	0.866	5.371	13.42

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front . . . . . Showa air-spring, 37mm stanchion tube diameter/4.5 in. (114mm)
Rear . . . . . single Showa shock, 10mm spring preload range within 13¼ turns of adjuster/4.2 in. (106mm)

BRAKES

Front . . . . . dual single-action hydraulic calipers, 9.7-in. (247mm) effective disc diameter
Rear . . . . . single-action hydraulic caliper, 8.5-in. (215mm) effective disc diameter

TIRES

Front . . . . . 100/90V16 Dunlop K625A tubeless
Rear . . . . . 110/90V17 Dunlop K625 tubeless

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

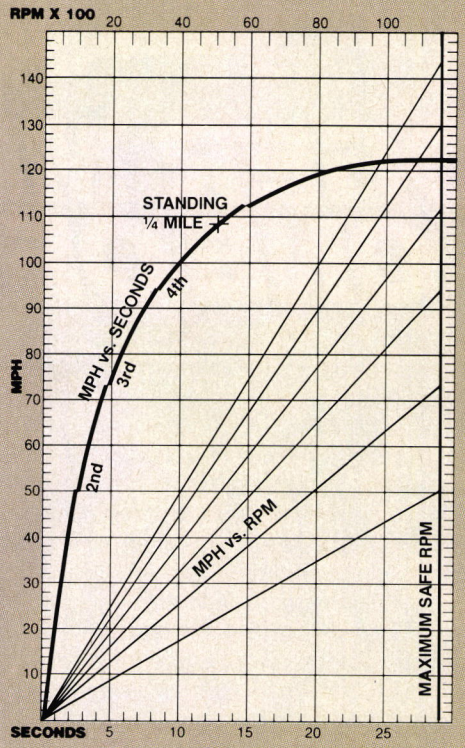
Weight . . . . . 392 lbs. (177.8kg)
Weight distribution . . . . . 48.2% front, 51.8% rear
Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) . . . . . 800 lbs. (363kg)
Load capacity (with full fuel tank) . . . . . 376 lbs. (170kg)
Wheelbase . . . . . 53.9 to 55.4 in. (1370 to 1407mm)
Seat height . . . . . 30.7 in. (780mm)
Handlebar width . . . . . 25.4 in. (645mm)
Footpeg height . . . . . 13.9 in. (352mm)
Ground clearance . . . . . 5.1 in. (130mm), at expansion chamber
Steering head angle . . . . . 27.1 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail . . . . . 3.94 in. (100mm)
Frame . . . . . box-section and tubular aluminum, double front downtubes
Oil capacity . . . . . 1.9 qt. (1.8/)
Fuel tank . . . . . steel, 5.1 gal. (19.2/), including 1.3 gal. (4.9/) reserve
Instrumentation . . . . . speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer, coolant temperature gauge

PERFORMANCE

Fuel consumption range . . . . . 23 to 38 mpg (10 to 16 km/l)
Average fuel consumption . . . . . 29 mpg (12 km/l)
Cruising range, maximum . . . . . 117 to 194 miles (189 to 312km)
Cruising range, reserve only . . . . . 30 to 49 miles (48 to 79km)
Speedometer error, 50 kph indicated . . . . . 45 kph actual
Speedometer error, 100 kph indicated . . . . . 90 kph actual
Best 1/4-mile acceleration . . . . . 12.410 sec., 107.77 mph (173 kph)
Top speed (observed) . . . . . 122 mph (196 kph)
Stopping distance from 30 mph . . . . . 35 ft. (10.7m)
Stopping distance from 60 mph . . . . . 135 ft. (41.1m)

WARRANTY: N/A

AVAILABLE COLORS: red-white-blue-and-yellow, red-white-blue-and-gold



All weight and measurements are taken with machine unladen and fuel tank empty.

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Cycle Guide's Monthly Chronicle of Scoops, Tips, Rumors and Hard Facts

BY LARRY WORKS

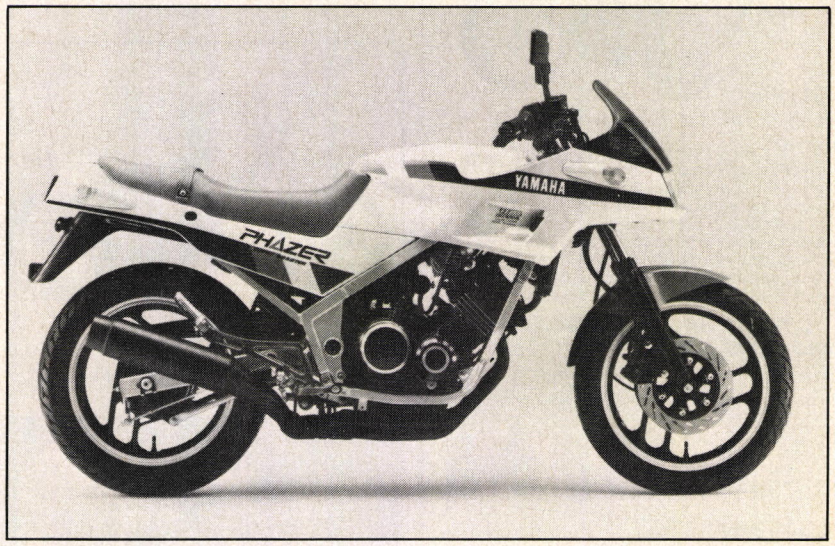
COMING SOON

• Competition in Japan's 250cc market is rapidly approaching the intensity of a jihad, with each manufacturer sending forth its own version of the one, true quarter-liter sportbike. Now Yamaha has its latest fighter for the 250 holy war, the Phazer. Curiously enough, this bike is a four-stroke, breaking with Yamaha's two-stroke RD/RZ mold. And if you squint your eyes just a bit at this little screamer, it starts to take on the aspect of its bigger brother, the FZ750. But no matter how you look at it, the Phazer is just as serious a sportbike as its 750 stablemate.

The Phazer's specifications reflect the depth of that seriousness, too. For example, the Phazer is powered by a six-speed, liquid-cooled, 16-valve, DOHC 249cc four that produces a claimed 45 horsepower at 14,500 rpm, and redlines at a shocking 16,500 rpm. That high-winding motor bolts into a single-shock, box-section steel-tube frame that incorporates an aluminum radiator into its left-side downtube. What's more, this diminutive street-screamer is said to weigh 304 pounds, and reportedly runs on the high side of 114 mph. With credentials like those, this 250 won't take a back seat to any other streetbike—any size, any make, anywhere—in seriousness of intent.

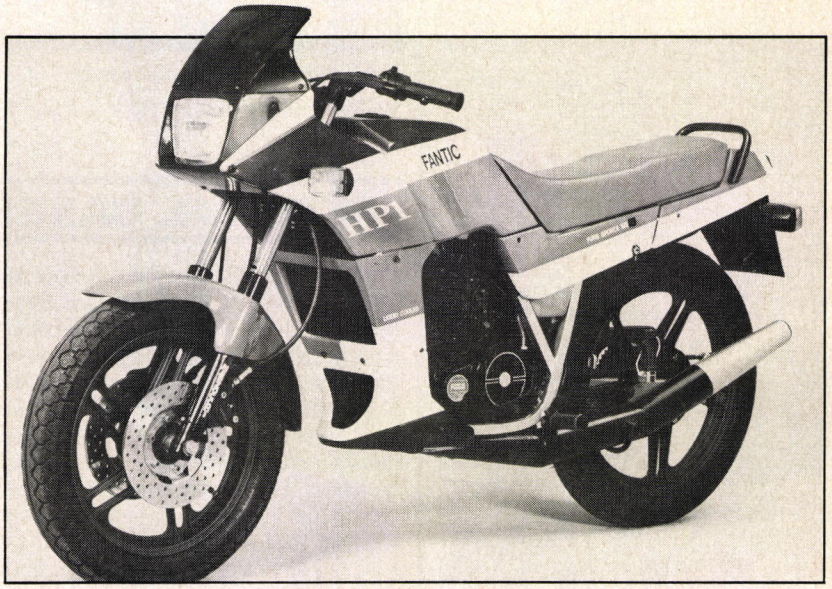
• Don't think for one minute that the Japanese 250 market has a hammerlock on rabid competition, though. In Italy, for instance, the 125 class is every bit as hotly contested. And dialing up the heat a degree or two is Fantic's new two-stroke Strada 125 HP1, a machine that's undoubtedly pure-sport, all the way down to the logo on its sidecover. The Strada's liquid-cooled 124cc single has a chrome-lined alloy cylinder, a 12:1 compression ratio, and puts a claimed 25 horsepower through its six-speed gearbox. That's sufficient, we're told, to propel the HP1 to a top speed of 87 mph. So don't let anyone tell you an eighth-liter streetbike can't be a performance machine.

• And while you're at it, don't let anyone tell you that Hondas aren't made in Italy. Before your very eyes you see proof to the contrary, this NS125F built by Honda Italia Industriale S.p.A. Aside from its liquid-cooled, two-stroke engine, six-speed gearbox and claimed output of 25-horsepower—all of which should make it suitable competition for Fantic's HP1—the NS has a few items not found on other Hondas: Marzocchi suspension components front and rear and a Dell'Orto carburetor.



Yamaha entered the 1985 quarter-liter Holy Wars armed with a Phazer

Call it the Doomsday weapon for 250cc street skirmishes.



Fantic's liquid-cooled Strada HP1 promises "Pure Sport"—and delivers

The demitasse of teacup streetracing.

• Italian running gear doesn't top the list of liberties some people take with Hondas, though. Take, for example, this highly individualistic EGLI Argon just released for sale in Germany. Underneath the flashbike bodywork, beneath the sueded fabric of the solo seat, beats the heart of a near-stock VF1000F.

• Sometimes, though, it's the factory itself that takes the liberties. For proof, you need only look at the curlicue paint job and the gold "chrome" that adorns the Rebel Special, a limited production special version of Honda's 250 Rebel that, we're assured, will only roam the streets of Japan.

Continued

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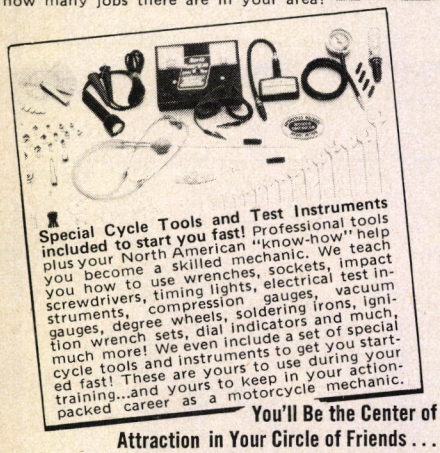

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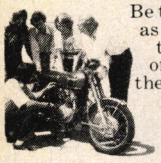

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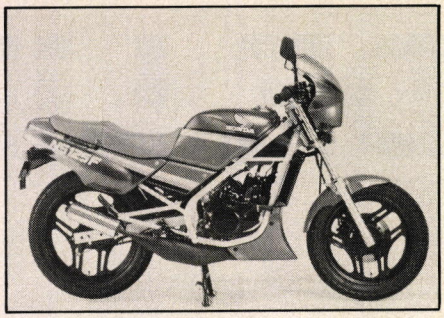
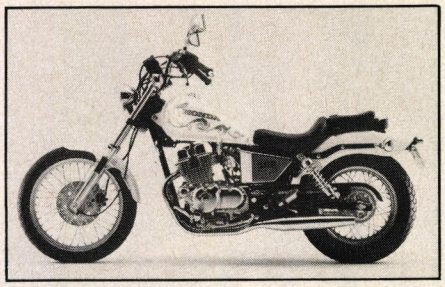


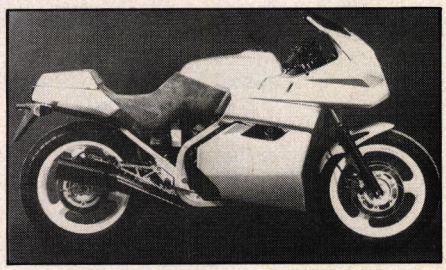
Honda NS125F with Italian flavor

Marzocchi, Dell'Orto, but no anchovies.



Japan-only Honda Rebel Special

Small numbers of a small cruiser.



Argon might be the ultimate "dresser"

EGLI running clothes for a VF1000F.

FEDERAL CASES

• When the Florida state legislature closed its 1985 session, one of the bills Gov. Bob Graham vetoed was HB647. The measure would have freed Florida riders over 21 from a mandatory helmet requirement. Graham acknowledged "some impingement on personal decision" was inherent in the state's helmet requirement, but defended his veto of HB647 as having a "valid basis in terms of saving lives and all the human tragedy and economic loss that goes with it."

• On the other side of the same fence, Georgia state Sen. Max Brannon introduced SB151, a measure similar to Florida's HB647. Brannon defended his convictions by saying: "It's not just a matter of freedom of choice; I think the current (mandatory helmet) law is a hindrance to safety." The measure was assigned to the Senate Public Safety Committee for further study.

• While the controversy over mandatory helmet laws continues to run its course, there's some pressure to take off helmets—specific ones, at least. Vetter Products, a division of Bell Helmets Inc., has notified NHTSA of a voluntary recall on certain Vetterlite I and II models. The affected helmets are Vetterlite I helmets with serial numbers 70-0032928 through 70-0045067 and Series II helmets manufactured from October 1984 through February 1985. The serial number and manufacturing dates can be found on stickers inside the helmets. If you have one of the affected models, contact either a local motorcycle dealer or Vetter Products directly at Route 136 East, P.O. Box 927, Rantoul, Illinois 61866; (217) 893-9300. You'll be given a replacement of equal or greater value.

• Still on the subject of headgear, a recently introduced program in Australia might shed new light on the art of helmet-making. Under the provisions of the system, all helmets involved in accidents resulting in fatal or serious head injuries will be subjected to testing, with results to be correlated with medical reports on rider injuries. In addition, Australia's standards for helmet impact resistance and penetration have been beefed up to include dynamic testing with an instrument-filled dummy that will record the physical stresses a human rider might suffer in an accident.

• And staying Down Under for a bit, the Australian Automobile Chamber of Commerce has announced a new organization, the Australian Motorcycle Industry Association. The fledgling group is scheduled to meet for the first time this summer, and will operate as a division of the AACC.

• File this under Turnabout Is Fair Play. In what might be a harbinger of things to come for the U.S. car market, 1986 Canadian cars will have to have their headlights on full-time. It's claimed that the change will result in 10,000 fewer accidents—and 125 fewer deaths—per year.

• Riders pulled over by the police in Kent, Washington, can expect to get a little something extra with a citation in the near future. Officers in the Kent Police Department will hand out a business card to every motorcyclist who's stopped for a traffic infraction. The card carries the Motorcycle Safety Foundation's hotline number, (800) 447-4700, and calling it will get the location of the nearest rider-education/safety course for motorcycles and ATVs. If the rider is 18 years old or younger, the police also will send a letter to the rider's parents, highlighting the importance of motorcycle training, and detailing local training schedules and venues. And even if you don't ride near Kent, chances are good that someday you'll receive a similar card. The policy is seen as the beginning of a nationwide program pushing motorcycle training.

• ATV riders in Iowa soon will find that new areas have been opened up for them— specifically, paved areas. Senate File 9 was signed into law recently, and it allows for travel of ATVs on certain specified public thoroughfares.

• Although specific motorcycle licensing might seem like a *fait accompli* to most riders, it's a question still to be addressed in some states. One state in which the issue has come to ground, though, is Mississippi, with the passage of SB2244. The bill established a spe-

cific motorcycle license requirement, including written and skills tests. SB2244 also included a "grandfather clause" which made it possible for motorcyclists already legally riding with a driver's license in that state to be licensed for motorcycles via a $1 renewal application and no further testing.

• Alabama Substitute House Bill 34 would have provided arrangements similar to those of Mississippi SB2244. And West Virginia HB1059 and 1404 would have established a motorcycle license requiring a skills test. All three measures failed to pass this year.

• Finally, self-funded rider-education bills are a current fixture on the motorcycle legislative scene. This year, Colorado HB1342, Delaware SB42, Indiana HB1645, Ohio HB291 and Tennessee SB306 all would establish rider/motorcycle safety programs, and would be funded by small increases in motorcycle licensing fees.

HARD CASH

• While you weren't looking, the scooter business escalated into the big time. In fact, an estimated 125,000 scooters will be sold in the United States this year, a 250 percent increase in sales from 1984 levels. And you can count on scooters turning up in unexpected places—like the lane next to you on the freeway. Honda, with a reported 84 percent of U.S. scooter sales, is marketing freeway-legal scooters for the United States for the first time—three models, to be exact. Soon they'll be coming out of the woodwork.

• Perhaps you've heard that U.S. Suzuki is engaged in a cooperative venture with BSA. Well, it's true, except the BSA in question isn't Birmingham Small Arms; it's the Boy Scouts of America. Suzuki will sponsor the BSA Heritage Campfire Caravan, a 57-day, 7500-mile cross-country celebration of the Boy Scouts' 75th Anniversary. Leading the Caravan will be two GV1400 Cavalcade LX Suzukis; in addition, U.S. Suzuki will provide Quadrunners to Scout officials during the Tenth National Scout Jamboree.

• Suzuki isn't the only moto-manufacturer in the donations business these days, however.

ATVs donated for Search & Rescue

Look, up in the air. . . .

American Honda recently gifted the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department Search and Rescue Squad with nearly $35,000 in ATVs and dual-purpose bikes. San Bernardi-

Continued

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K391S

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MM90-19 TL	49.95
K391S QUALIFIER	
130/90V16 RAISED WHITE LETTERS	$64.25
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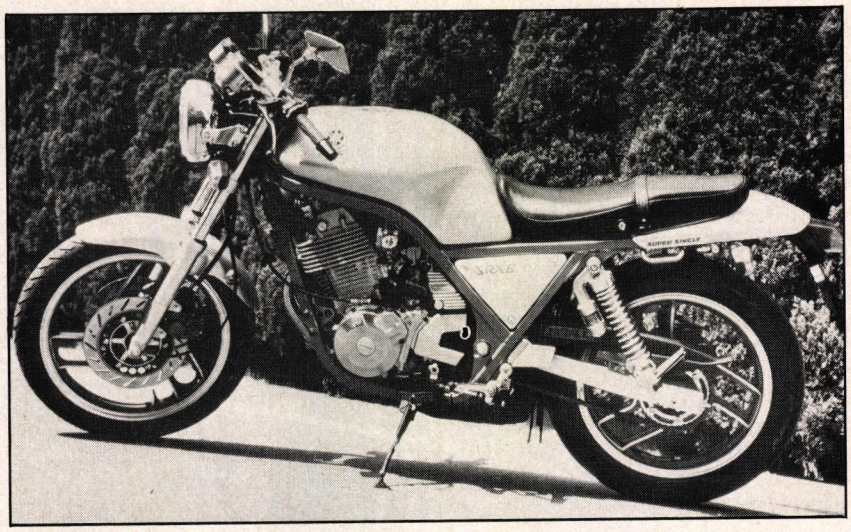
RIDE/REPORT:

Yamaha SRX6

A singular path to backroad performance.



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 HISAKO SUGI

Yamaha's SRX600 is a mixture of SR500, four valves and new-wave styling

But beneath the flash, it's still the son of SR Sr.

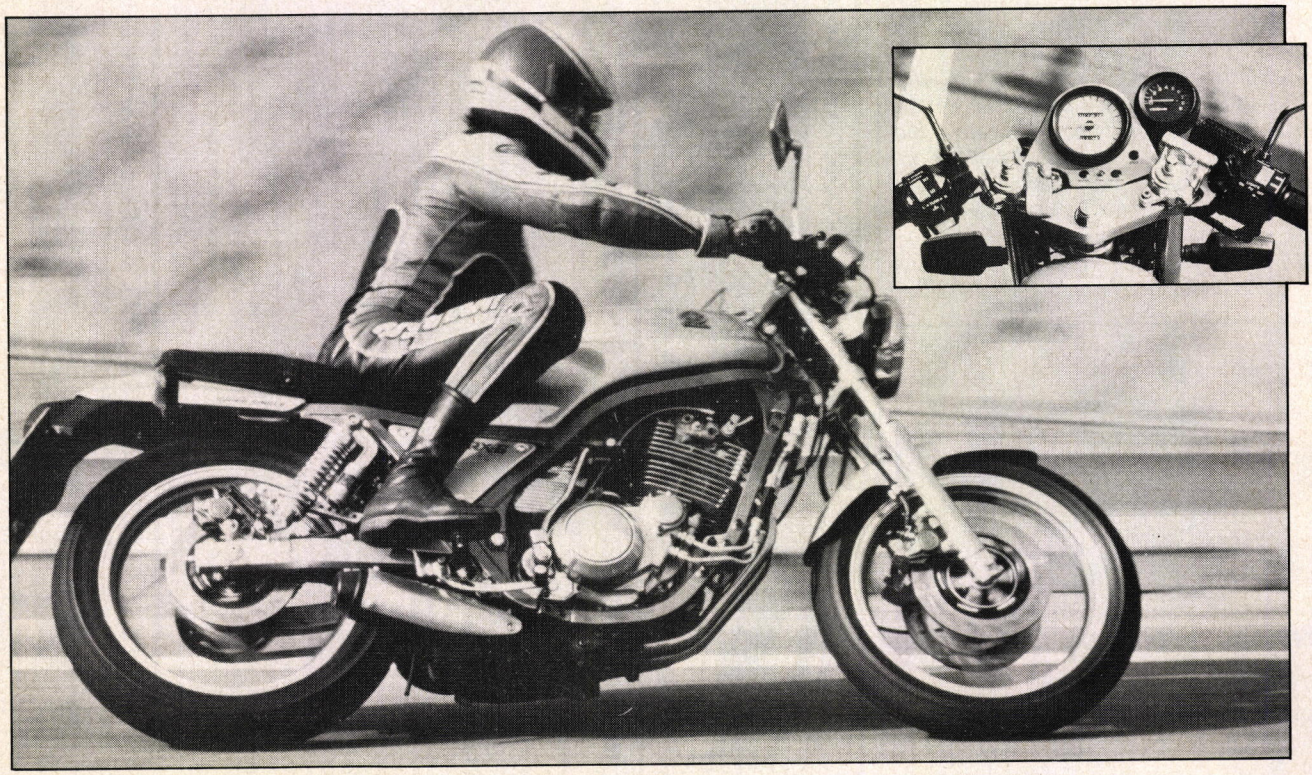
• As incredible as some might find it, there's still room—though perhaps not in America—for a sporting motorcycle without multiple cylinders, liquid-cooling or the horsepower to turn pavement into rubble. Yamaha's new SRX6 occupies that slot nicely, and, in fact, this latest example of the four-stroke street single could well show those multi-cylinder megabikes its taillight down a twisty road.

Yamaha already had some experience in building a road-going thumper, with the bygone SR500. And, like its predecessor, the SRX is, despite its sleek bodywork, quite straightforward. The frame is a double-cradle type, but without the full-length backbone that made traditional British single frames so heavy. A detachable frame member on the right side eases the task of engine removal.

Bolted into the frame is a five-speed, 608cc four-valve engine, which seems nothing so much as an SR500 motor taken one step further. The SRX features CDI ignition, a manual compression-release and a three-tier oil cooler fitted to the front downtubes. The only unusual part of the engine is its exhaust, which includes a large, bulbous section hidden beneath the motor. As a result of the exhaust's curious shape, the spent gases follow a tortuous route, enabling a relatively long exhaust path in what appears to be a short, tucked-in pipe. At any rate, the bike's remarkable low-end power bears witness to the exhaust system's effectiveness. The engine is claimed to produce 42 horsepower at 6500 rpm, which allows for spirited riding with the 329-pound SRX.

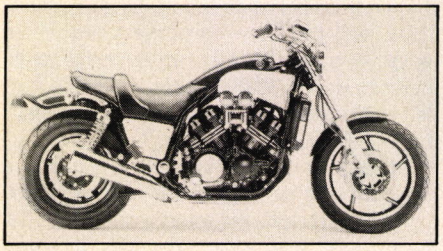
Adding to the Yamaha's sporting character are its brakes, triple slotted discs which, coupled with the bike's considerable engine-braking, can haul the 600 down in short order. Excellent stopping, along with generous cornering clearance, light weight and a crouched, racy riding position, make the SRX just the ticket for embarrassing faired, heavyweight sportbikes on twisty pavement. Granted, this newest street thumper might not be impressive in terms of absolute engine performance compared to those aforementioned sportbikes, but on anything other than a long, straight stretch of tarmac, the SRX rider can cherry-pick to his heart's content. Yet—for now, anyway—that experience belongs to Japanese riders alone.

—Peter Bellamy



no is the largest county in California, and the ATVs will be airlifted by helicopter to outlying patrol areas.

• If you've got a V-Max and a hot hand, you might be eligible for some contingency money under a new program from Yamaha. Four events in the NHRA Pro Stock category are covered: the 7-Eleven Cajun Nationals, the Budweiser Summernationals, the U.S. Nationals and the Winston World Finals. Anyone riding a V-Max to a first-place finish at one of those events will take home an extra $300 from Yamaha; second-place will earn $100 in contingency funds.



Yamaha NHRA contingency fund

Ride a V-Max all the way to the bank.

RUMORS

• Our spies stationed outside U.S. Suzuki claim to have seen the cover come off of something unexpected recently. According to the eyewitness report, the latest wrist-rocket circling Suzuki's offices is a liquid-cooled vee-four sportbike, with Katana-inspired lines. Moreover, our observer says he got close enough to see "500cc" painted on the sidecover.

• Whether or not a half-liter vee-four Katana pans out, you can bet that Suzuki's early success with the air/oil-cooled GSX-R750 will lead to similar machines in other displacements. Sources overseas report that the 750's chief designer, Yasunobo Fujii, already has begun work on a big-bore version, most likely a 1000. And the problems of getting the RG500 square-four two-stroke to pass EPA emissions testing has laid the foundation for rumors of a new air/oil-cooled 500 in U.S. dealerships for 1986.

• With all the attention being showered on the GSX—not to mention Yamaha's 20-valve FZ750—a good deal of the shine has worn off Honda's vee-four Interceptors. But those in the know claim Honda R&D hasn't been idling. Reportedly, there's been a tactical wait, until the new three-quarter-liter offerings could be sampled, picked apart—and challenged. We've heard from sources at Le Mans that the challenge will come in the form of a new-generation vee-four, the VFR750. The trenchcoat brigade insists the bike has a frame made of aluminum box-section tubing, with a new, lighter motor positioned much lower than in the current VF. Sources also claim the VFR engine will have gear-driven camshafts, similar to the arrangement used on the VF1000R. Figures being cir-

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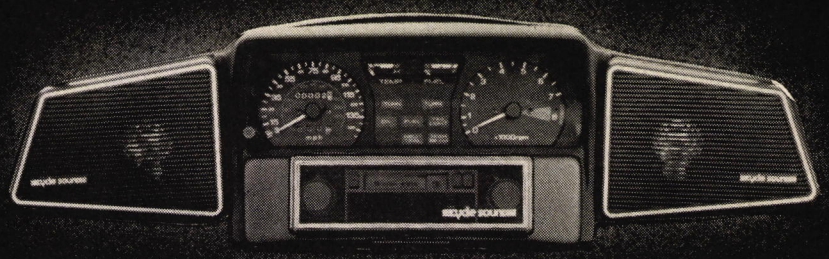

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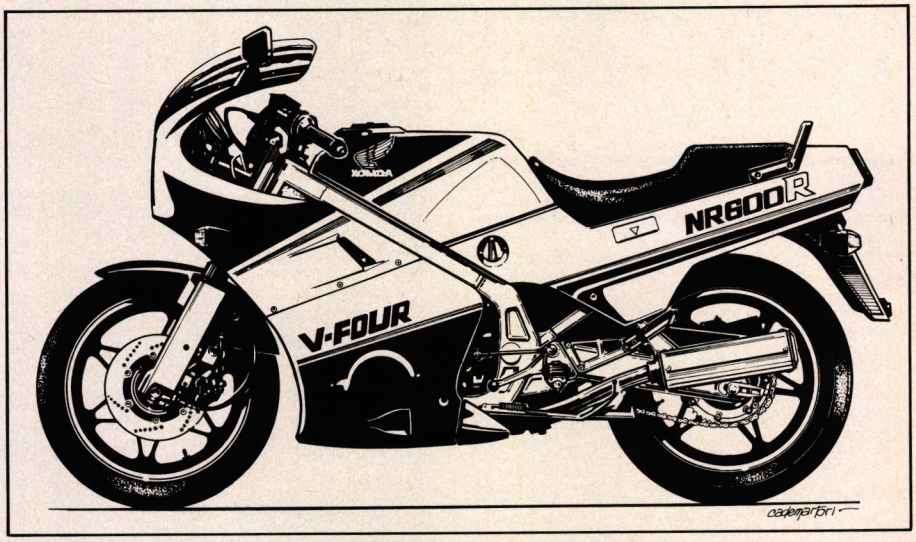
culated about the new 750cc vee-four include 115 horsepower, with a featherlight dry weight of about 400 pounds. The last bit of this rumor has the bike being unveiled at the Paris Show in October, and firmly pushing the air-cooled inline-four CBX750 out of the development limelight.

• But if you thought tales of a new-generation 750 was all the rumor mill produced on Honda this month, think again. Reports from Japanese sources have Honda investing heavily in midsize twin-turbo development, with an eye toward both race and street machines. This item dovetails nicely with the latest gossip about Honda GP development. If things pan out as per the most popular story, Freddie Spencer will be riding a twin-turbo 250 for the 1986 GP season—one with technology derived from the oval-piston NR500.

• In a related juicy bit, one inside connection claims Honda had final prototypes of the VFR750—along with new designs for the tranverse-four CBR750 and VT250R twin—built, shined and ready to debut at last year's Cologne Show. The story is that Honda held off releasing the bikes because they simply weren't *different* enough from existing technology. This same source hints at an NR600, powered by a vee-four with oval pistons, and an NR350TT, a vee-twin with *twin turbos.* Our men say those models might appear at the Tokyo Show this year, and promise to dig out more information . . . soon.

• Everything at Honda seems fair game these days, and there's even conversation about small, twin-vane rotary engines being scrutinized by Honda R&D. Sources inside the gate at Honda are denying this particular rumor—but not the others.

• Yamaha, too, is said to have an abundance of sportbikes on tap for the coming model-year. According to the latest gossip, the RZ-series vertical twins are scheduled to be replaced by a pair of two-stroke vee-twins with aluminum frames. Purportedly, the two new vee-twins will share more than a few techno-tricks with the RZ500, and will feature both



High-tech, high-performance Honda NR600R rumored to debut at Tokyo Show

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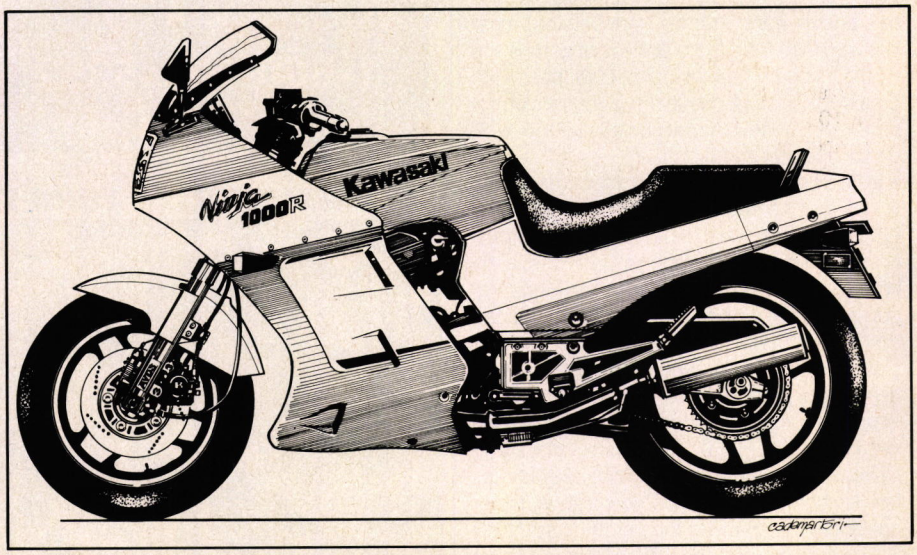

Insiders say Kawasaki Ninja 1000 is a likely candidate for model-year 1986

Portrait of 10.5 quarter-mile at rest.

ILLUSTRATIONS © 1985 HECTOR CADEMARTORI

reed-valve induction and power valves. One source, who claims to have had a look at some very private clipboards, claims the 250 produces about 45 horsepower, while the 350 churns out upward of 60. What's particularly tantalizing about this look into tomorrow is the detail of the rumor. For instance, the wheel sizes are said to be 17-inch, front; 18-inch, rear. The tag line to this short story is that the 350 will be in production by November—and in U.S. dealerships by March. And talk from other sources of a new TZ250 does nothing but substantiate the rumor.

• The Paris-Dakar Rally is big business Over There. So big, we've heard, that this year both Yamaha and Honda are working on all-new models to tackle the desert race—and to wrest victory away from longtime desert-fox BMW. Reportedly, Yamaha is developing a 750cc liquid-cooled parallel twin, and Honda is said to have a 900cc air-cooled vee-twin, based loosely on its shaft-drive XLV750. As usual, the existence of new models such as these, even if they only exist as fantasy, has prompted several insiders to start imagining production versions for the U.S. market. Only time—and perhaps a Paris-Dakar victory—will tell.

• Time seems to be working on this next item, as well. For the last few months, you've read reports of a new, larger Ninja. Based on overseas sources, those rumors should bear fruit by the Tokyo Show in October. We're told the newest Ninja, or GPZ1000R, will feature radial tires on both of its 16-inch rims, and that a top speed of *three times* the Double Nickel is part of the program. And a new 750 version also is said to be in the wings. It could well be that the end of the air-cooled GPz series is at hand.

• Another long-running rumor has had an infusion of new details since last month. Current stories on a new Hesketh include mention of a single-shock frame, a 24 percent increase in power, new bodywork and talk of a 115-horsepower version for BOTT racing. Apparently, the final details of the new bike are being moved along so fast that the existing Hesketh has been shelved—at least until the sport model is ready for sale. The time period that's been linked with completion of the project has production versions ready within 10 months.

• Still keeping with updates on yesterday's gossip, last month you read about new street-going four-stroke Singles from Yamaha and Honda; this month, the talk is that big thumpers from Kawasaki and Suzuki aren't far behind. The Kawasaki, we're told, code-named ZS600R, is a modified version of a KLR600. Claimed horsepower is said to be in excess of 50, with a dry weight of 330 pounds. The Suzuki supposedly is called the GR600S, and our source reports talk of a new, torquey, long-stroke, air-cooled engine.

• In fact, a well-placed insider speculates that the next major step in sportbike design will be one that some might feel is a step backward. He says not to be surprised by a wave of new-generation four-stroke Singles in various displacements. And, in an unguarded moment,

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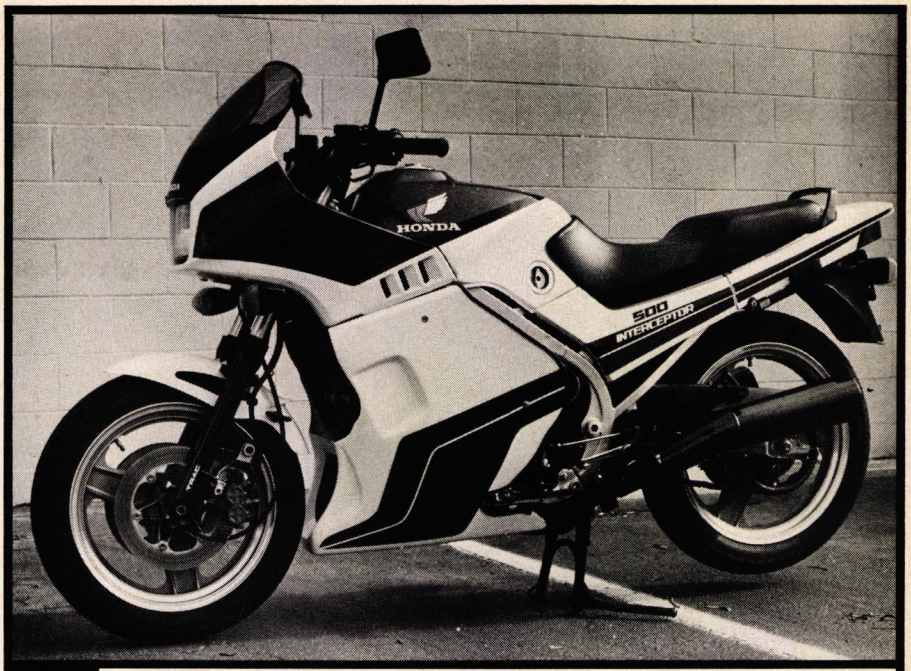

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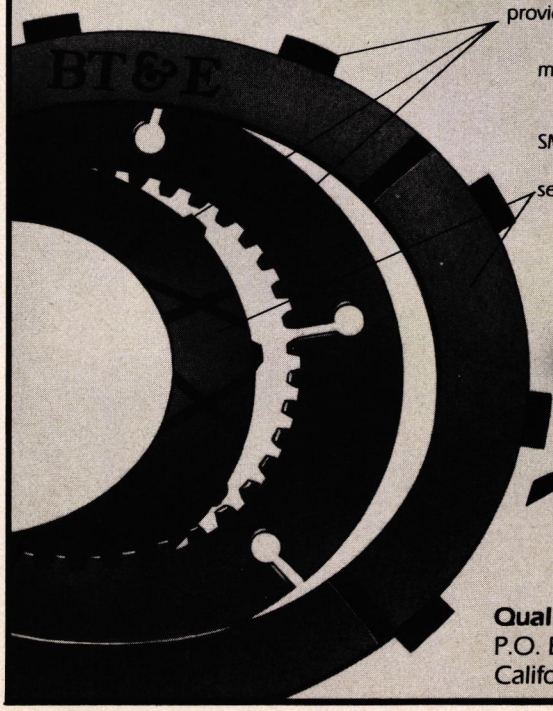

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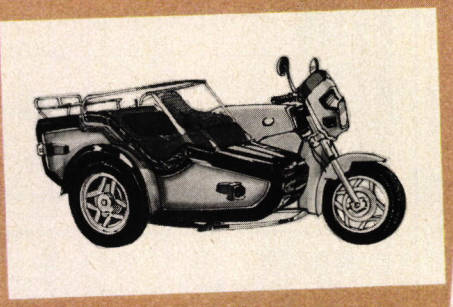

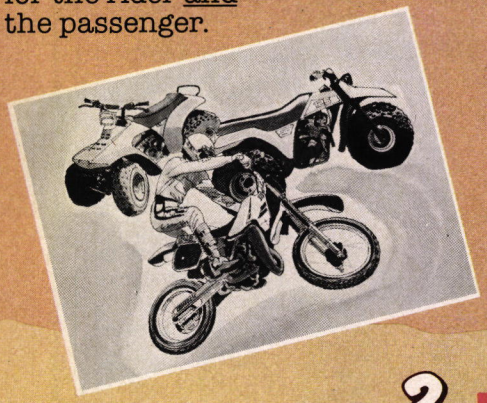

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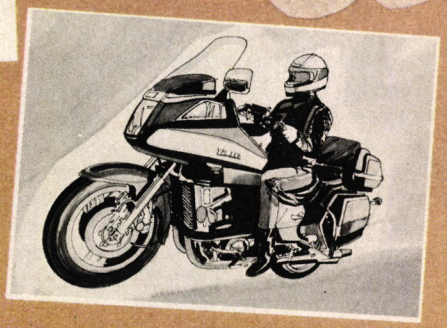

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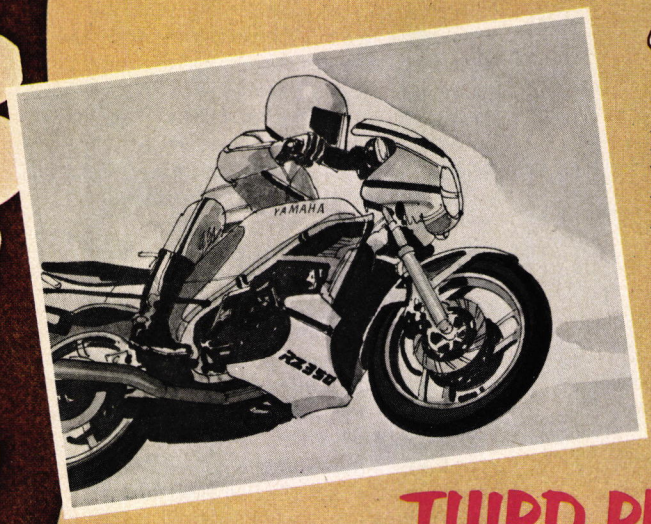

4 SECOND PRIZES

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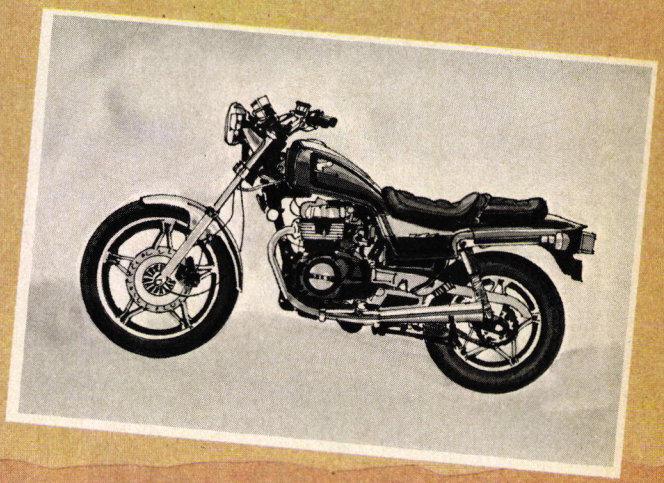

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he suggested that one of them might be a Yamaha dual-purpose bike built specifically to capitalize on the popularity of the Superbikers event. He also made mention of the designation SRT250, which would describe a machine with some components lifted from the domestic-model SRX250 streetbike.

• Just so the fifth-largest motorcycle manufacturer in the world, Cagiva, won't feel left out of this month's rumors, our long-lens types outside of Cagiva's Varese, Italy, factory swear they spotted a long, lean vee-twin-powered bike, styled for the American market. The word is that Cagiva will unveil a cruiservee at the Milan Show in November, and there are plans of releasing it as an American model in 1986.

• There's also talk that a Moto Guzzi transverse-triple design, long thought terminally pigeonholed, has been hauled out, dusted off and tacked down to the drawing board. In fact, the scuttlebutt is that the engine already has produced 110-plus horsepower on the dyno. The DOHC, 12-valve engine was a design project involving Maserati, and word from Italy is that production models aren't too far off.

• And let's not forget the latest conversation circulating around the gadget cluster. According to an inside source, at least one manufacturer is—and has been—working on something new and fascinating for the long-haulers. We're told that the latest advance in 1986 full-boat touring equipment might very well be wireless radio headsets.

• Not all is wheels, gear and new models in the rumor mill, though. One source claims a major motorcycle manufacturer will indulge in a little free-form market survey by opening motorcycle-clothing retail stores in major malls across the country. The kicker is that the marketing strategy isn't targeted for motorcyclists, just for people who want to look like they ride. And you probably never even thought of yourself as a fashion plate.

APART FROM THE CROWD

• We've heard of getting butterflies before a race, but rarely do they cause a race to be canceled. And even rarer is a case of butterflies closing a racetrack. Nonetheless, our man in Britain reports the East Worldham motocross track was closed recently, because the noise and dust of racing reportedly posed a threat to rare butterflies inhabiting the area. The British government forced the promoter to close the track under threat of injunction.

• Joiners of the world, unite. There's a new organization with some rather stringent membership requirements. It's the Safety Helmet Council of America's Saved By The Helmet Club. The membership consists of motorcyclists who have "experienced firsthand the importance of wearing a helmet." If you think you're qualified to join, or if you know someone else who might be, find out for sure. Request a membership questionnaire by writing: Saved By The Helmet Club, P.O. Box 92597,

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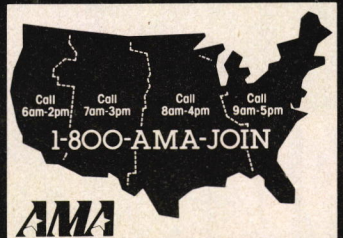

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Los Angeles, California 90009. If you pass muster for this elite group, you'll receive a patch signifying the fact, as well as the club's quarterly newsletter.

• An even more elite group consists of a Norwegian rider, who will engage in a 12-month, 160,000-mile trip across—and around, and through, and over—Europe. Reportedly with backing from BMW, this soon-to-be Scandinavian motorcycle-fixture intends his epic journey to serve as rolling proof that motorcycles are safe. If plans work out, he'll ride an average of 3076 miles per week. Barring happenstance, he's covered about 37,000 miles by now.

• Somewhat shorter than that 160,000-mile trek is the second running of the Ironbutt Rally (See "They Shoot Harleys, Don't They?" January 1985 issue). The event is a mere 8560 miles, but it's covered in 12 days; almost 5000 miles per week. Yet compared to the year-round Europe tour, it's practically a sprint race.

AFTER THE FACT

• Last month's Hard Cash section had speculation about a Harley-Davidson overseas manufacturing deal. Since then, a bit more news has surfaced. Reportedly, the European production arrangement involves not merely vee-twins, but the long-awaited, long-rumored vee-four Nova that's been kicking around for the last five years or so. And in one small twist of the knife, if the stories about the new overseas plant are true, Harley could be facing the selfsame International Trade Commission import tariff on large-displacement motorcycles it helped to initiate three years ago.

• Two months ago in the Coming Soon section, we showed you a Fantic 301 trials bike. Along with the technical information was a notation that early reports indicated the Fantic had the

Production model Fantic Trial 301

Finished and ready to go slow.

right kind of slow to please the feet-up crowd. The reports weren't the only thing early, though; the picture was of a prototype Fantic. For those of you who lost sleep over the cobby appearance of the prototype bike, we present the production 301, replete with bodywork, paint—and still the right kind of slow.

• In last month's Winners & Losers, we mentioned Ricky Graham was seeking his second Camel Pro Series Championship. Actually, Graham is going after his second *consecutive* championship; he won his first in 1982. •

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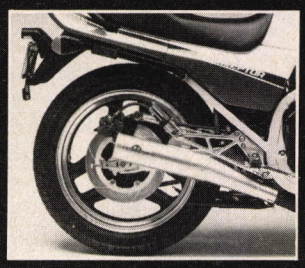

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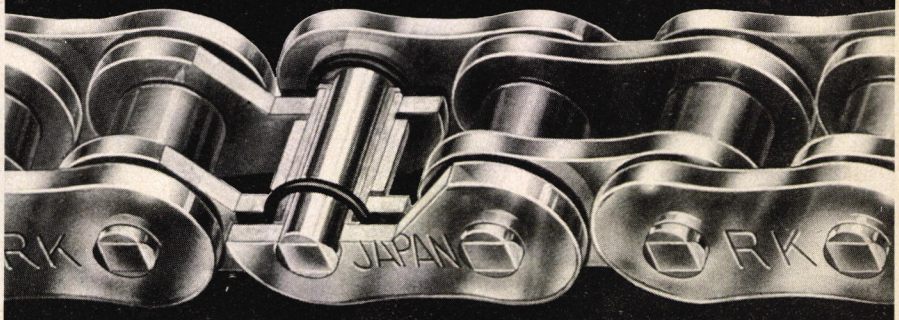

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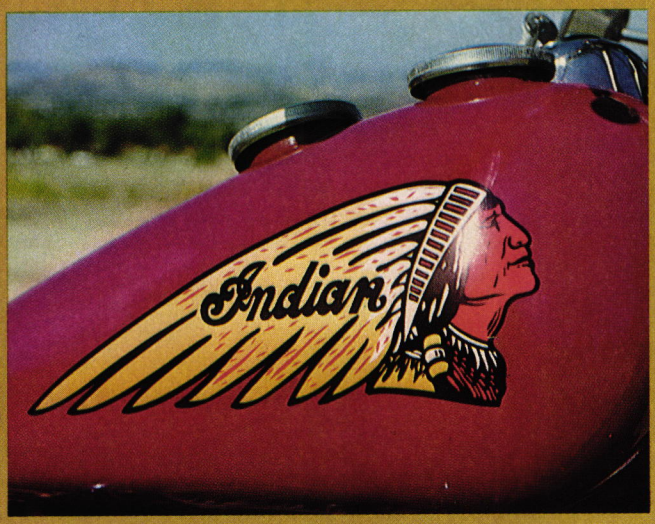

Indians on the Warpath

A modern-day medicine man breathes new life into the tribe.

BY JOE KRESS

"The best part, the very best part, comes when a customer picks up his bike. The look on his face as he sees it finished for the first time, then starts it, puts it in gear and takes off down the road, is priceless. And I'm smiling too. Another Indian is back on the street." *Jacob D. Junker*

After work, bench racing among friends rarely amounts to anything; at best, it's a pleasant time forgotten almost as soon as it ends. Sometimes, though, such sessions can change a person's life. That's what happened to Jake Junker, the multitalented mechanical wizard and owner of Indian Motorcycle News. Although he didn't realize it then, Junker's seemingly idle conversation one night was his first step toward becoming one of the largest suppliers of parts for Indian motorcycles, and forming a complete restoration center for that 30-year-dead marque. In fact, Junker's Indian Motorcycle News company even has become a modern-day Indian dealership, of sorts. "Our 'almost new' Chiefs are turning into a big part of the business," he explains. "I'll do 10 or 12 of them a year, ground-up, crankpin-to-handlegrip rebuilds, sometimes on basket cases customers bring in, sometimes starting with shop-core bikes to fill an order taken over the phone." Prices for a running, correctly restored bike start at $8250, and go up from there. And whether supplying just the parts, or a complete bike, Jake Junker is on a crusade to repopulate the streets with flathead twins.

But until that bench-racing session nearly 10 years ago, antique bikes—Indians or any others—weren't a part of Junker's moto-life. Motocross and scrambles racing consumed his interest then, and his time. Jake's Cycle Center was already a successful dealership and tuning shop, with performance pipes its specialty. Junker traded the crackle of racing two-strokes for the throb of ancient flatheads, though, almost without knowing it. And the bull session that brought on the gradual change was the old "my first bike" story. Shortly afterwards, Junker spotted an ad for *his* first bike, and a Whizzer found its way into a

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 STEVE ESSIG

The past lives again, thanks to Junker's handiwork and a junker graveyard, his chief source of Indians and parts.

corner of Jake's Cycle. Another followed, then a Norton, then an Indian. Resale for profit wasn't the plan, though; Junker simply found himself buying one old bike after another, almost compulsively. Then one day a customer walked in and offered Junker twice what he'd paid for a recent addition to the rusty-bike stable. "I guess that was the turning point. From that moment on I was in the antique bike business," Junker recalls.

For a business to survive for any length of time, though, it needs stock. Supplying motocrossers was one thing; supplying antique-motorcycle restorers was something entirely different. So the need for setup stock sent Junker tracking down a local version of the timeless moto-tale: an old dealer who simply closes his doors and walks away, leaving everything behind. Junker remembered his father and uncle telling a similar story decades ago, about an eccentric auto dealer just a few towns away who went into the motorcycle business during the late '40s, only to give it up weeks later, storing everything in a warehouse. The dealer had long since passed away, but his widow confirmed the story, brought Junker to the ware-

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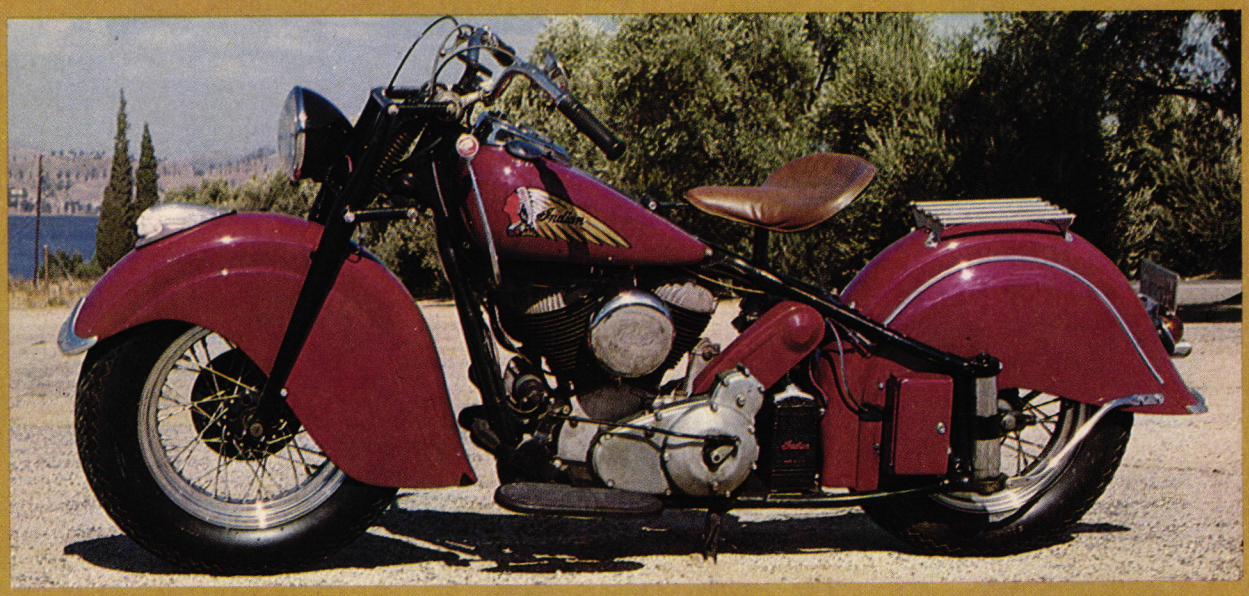
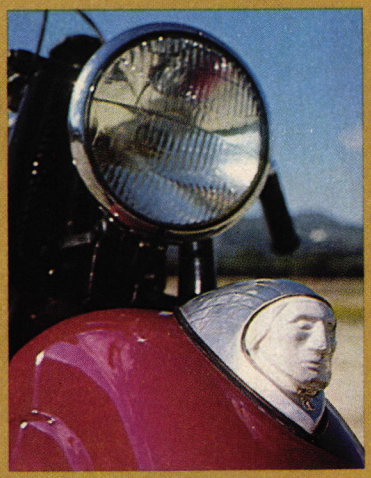


Indians

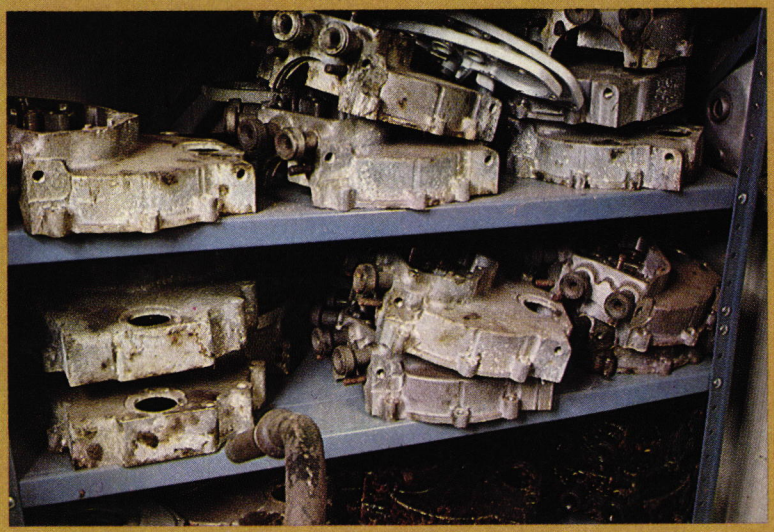
house and set a price. It took four truckloads to empty out the remaining bikes, spare parts and all the unopened crates that made up a 1947 Indian dealer's initial inventory. Junker had frames, engines, seats, saddlebags, small parts, big parts, literature, displays—all brand new. In short, he had a complete Indian dealership, circa '47.

The next step in Junker's transformation from supplier of motocross parts to restorer came at an antique bike meet; the event was an eye-opener for him. "I couldn't believe it," he recalls. "Here I'd been in the motorcycle *business* and I had no idea all this was going on." There, Junker saw enthusiasts; likable people with money to spend on their hobby, and reasonable enough not to demand delivery yesterday. Ideal customers, in other words, and quite a change from his motocross clientele.

Junker brought to the meet a one-page flier listing some of his recently acquired parts, titling it "Indian Motorcycle News," after the defunct company's own in-house publication. And the response was much greater than he'd expected; it quickly became apparent that demand would deplete his inventory quickly. But Jake Junker is a master craftsman in a number of disciplines, from fabrication to color finishing. When he saw the market of Indian enthusiasts and what it had to offer, he tooled up and began building exact duplicates of the most-asked-for

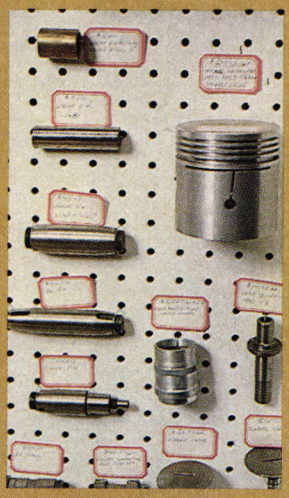


Junker hopes that one day he can offer a Chief replica, perfect in every detail.

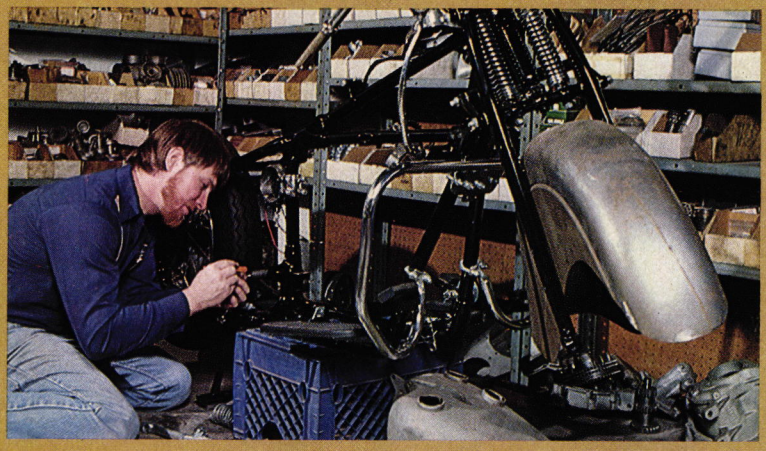


parts. Indian Motorcycle News now had a subdivision: Junker was in the repro-parts business. His first offerings were duplicate toolboxes, complete with Indian-script latches.

With only word-of-mouth advertising, his one-page flier grew into a 23-page monthly newsletter, and it's now a 65-page catalog. Today his stock of Indian parts ranges from backing plates to bearing races, from chainguards to Chumme seats. In fact, Junker has enough new repro-parts to assemble 60 percent of an Indian Chief. And a correctly restored model, at that, right down to the fringed saddlebags, chrome trim and correct color of paint. Junker hopes that one day soon he'll be able to offer a *complete* Chief replica, perfect in every detail from its tires to its tank badges.

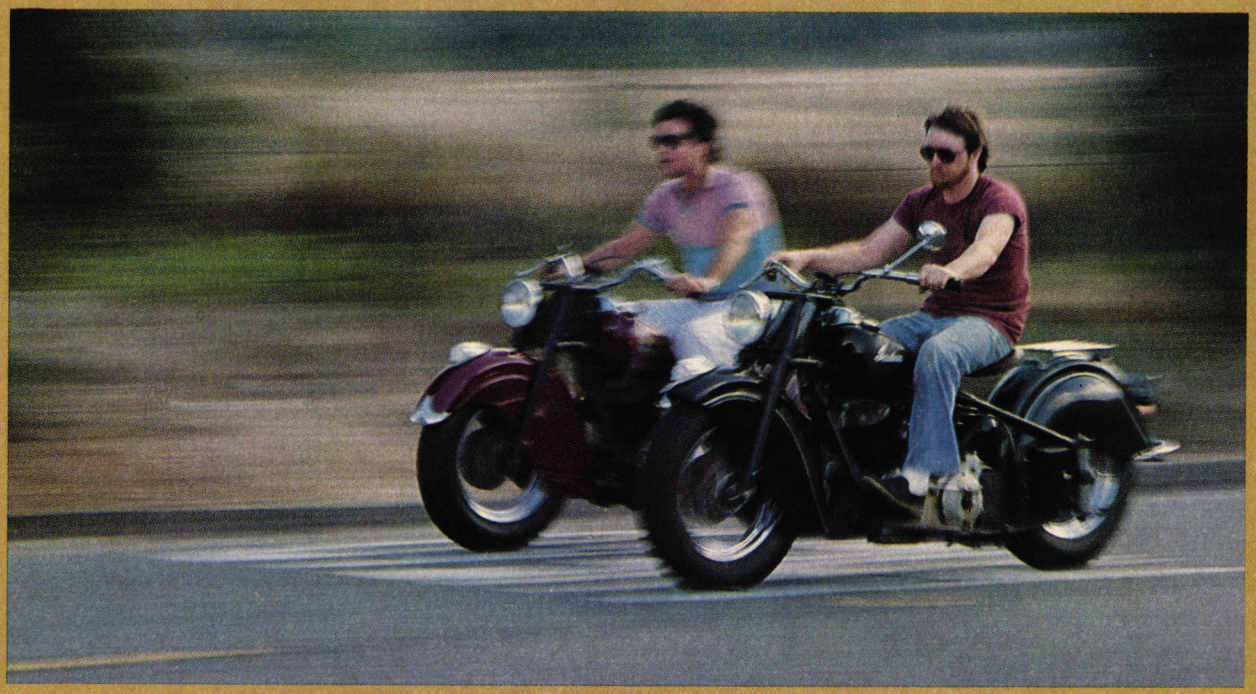


New old stock—a new life for old Indians.



And there's every reason to believe such a bike would be *better* than the original, too. Junker does still offer NOS (new old stock) parts for the fanatic restorer who must have everything 100 percent original, but if an Indian Motorcycle News repro part can be used without detracting from the bike's appearance, the change is made. Modern piston and ring sets, for example, are of much higher quality than original Indian equipment. Likewise, Indian Motorcycle News' needle bearings (to replace the stock transmission bushings), O-ring-sealed valve covers and 12-volt electrical systems all contribute to making a restored Indian a roadworthy, fun-to-ride antique.

A good number of the bikes are ridden, too, to the point of wearing out a *second* time. It's not unusual for a customer to ship a bike back to Junker in need of a complete overhaul, years after its original restoration. It might be one of Junker's bikes, 50,000 miles later, or it might be the work of an amateur who wants the job done right the second time. But either way Jake Junker is more than happy to take on the job. He wants Indians back on the road—it's part of his crusade. If you do, too, drop him a line at Indian Motorcycle News, Dept. CG, P.O. Box 455, 32606 Hartley, Lake Elsinore, California 92330, or call (714) 678-1583. And let the phone ring a few times; a good connection for genuine time travel takes a little longer. ●



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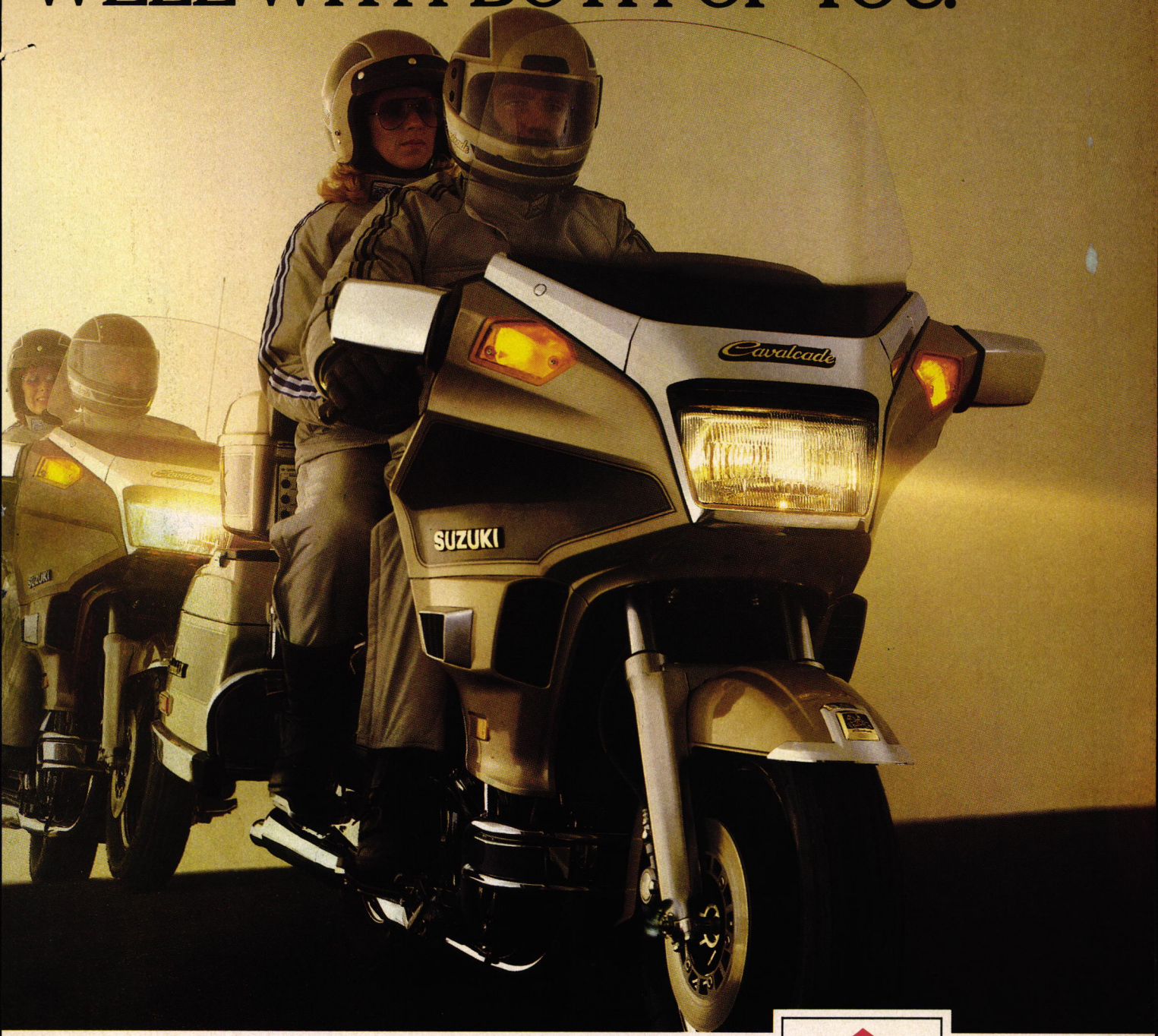

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ROAD TEST:

Harley-Davidson XLH 883 Sportster

Heavy metal for light wallets.

BY MARC COOK

There's a specific requirement for buying a Harley-Davidson, and it has nothing to do with leather vests or screaming-eagle tattoos. Still, it's a requisite that often determines who buys real Milwaukee iron and who buys one of the high-tech Japanese cruisers. Simply put, Harleys are expensive: The FXRS Low Glide, for example, costs more than $8000, and even Harley's least expensive '85 model, the XLX Sportster, goes out the door for more than $4200. And in the case of the XLX, that figure is particularly significant, because Harley's research shows that Sportster sales are extremely price sensitive, with XLs priced under $4000 selling quite well.

Harley's research indicated something else, too: H-D needed a model that was not only priced under that threshold, but that also would lure non-Harley riders into the fold. And many of those new-to-Harley riders want a bike that's smooth, oil-tight and up to modern levels of construction. For that purpose, then, a plain-Jane, under-$4000 Sportster simply wouldn't go far enough: The 998cc XLH lacked the sophistication and modern technology found on the more expensive Evolution FX-series bikes. As a result, Harley bit the bullet and put the XLH through the Evolution process, but kept its price below the magic four-grand number.

That's precisely where the 883 Sportster comes in. Harley applied the successful Evolution technology it used on the FX-series bikes to the Sportster, in an effort to bring the XLH up to date. In the 883's case, though, only the engine got the V^2 treatment; further redesign would have bumped the price up too high, so the chassis had to use as many

Continued

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 RICH COX

existing parts as possible. Consequently, the 883's running gear, bodywork and final drive are identical to those on last year's XLX. At the ledger's bottom line, those cost-cutting measures paid off: The 883 carries a suggested retail price of $3995, the least expensive 1986 Harley by a considerable margin.

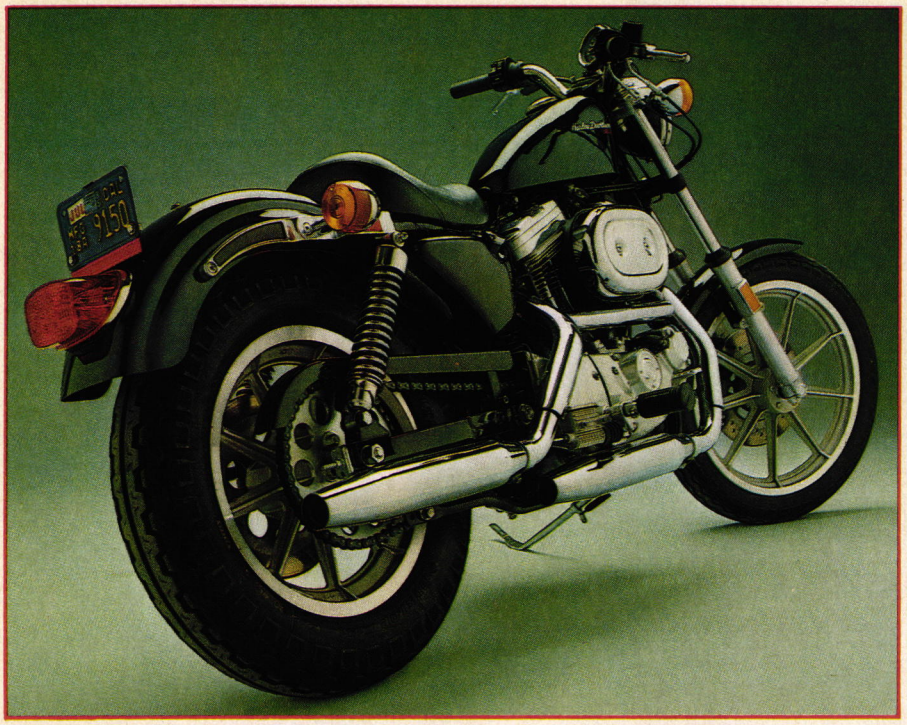
But a Harley, even a blue-light economodel, must have all the right credentials to remain attractive to the Harley faithful, and most important to the traditionalists is the booming vee-twin engine. That faction will be pleased to discover the Evolution process hasn't sifted any of the classic Harley character from the engine, despite being downsized from 998cc to 883cc, a return to the displacement of the original overhead-valve Sportster. From the moment the first cylinder fires, the motor broadcasts an unmistakable Harley-Davidson heritage. This year, however, tougher noise emissions laws—which lower the maximum noise level nearly 50 percent—have toned down some of the H-D's intake and exhaust

The Evolution process hasn't sifted out any of the classic Harley mechanical presence.

roar. Consequently, the tighter noise restrictions—together with the drop in displacement—take some of the bite out of the Harley's bark, resulting in a noticeable performance loss. You'll feel the loss most right off idle, too, where the XLH's throttle response has softened. The motor still pulls from basement-level revs with thunderous authority, and its copious midrange is still mostly intact, but the 883 is perceptibly down on power compared to the 998cc Sportster.

Something the Sportster didn't lose in the transformation is its vibration. Harley chose not to utilize rubber engine mounts on the 883, and so the annoying buzzing found on older Sportsters is still present in the XLH. Admittedly, the 883 shakes slightly less than the '85 XLH we tested, but it's still far from being smooth. At almost any rpm, the footpegs, handgrips and seat are fairly alive with vibration, and past 70 mph, the bike shakes hard enough to make the mirror do a slow pirouette on its stalk.

Although that style of vibration is all too familiar to Sportster riders, the pieces making the pounding have changed substantially. In fact, the 1340 Evolution engine's redesign fairly pales compared to the work put into the Sportster, though the technology put into both engines is virtually identical. Like the Big Twins, the 883 now utilizes aluminum heads and barrels, replacing the cast-iron units found on the Sportster since 1957. In addition, the Evolution Sportster's included valve angle has gone from the old XL's 90 degree figure down to 58 degrees—same as in the 1340 V^2 engine.



© 1985 VIC HUBER

XLH shows off its classic leanness and trademark staggered dual exhausts

But tougher noise emissions laws bottle up some of the 883's fury.

Harley downsized the Sportster's valves and ports, too, another tuning trick used on the V² Big Twins, and one that achieves higher intake-tract velocities for good cylinder-filling and more torque at low rpm. H-D downsized the bore, as well, from 81.0mm to 76.2mm, to get the 883cc displacement, and the pistons follow the 1340's flat-top design. Those pistons also combine with a new, "bathtub" combustion chamber for more efficient fuel burning, and an increase in compression ratio from 8.8:1 to 9.0:1.

In the case of the 1338cc Evolution engine, the redesign stopped at the base gaskets, but with the 883, revisions extend well into the bottom end. For instance, under the cylinders there's a new crankcase, crankshaft and primary cover, and while there's nothing radically different about any of those pieces, the bottom-end *does* sport an XLH first: hydraulic cam followers. Those offer lower maintenance, and together with the new computer-matched camshaft gears, produce less mechanical noise than the previous Sportster's valve train. And to keep the four hydraulic roller-tappets pumped up, H-D revised the XLH's dry-sump lubrication system to provide greater oil flow. Overall, the changes fulfill H-D's goal of lower maintenance, by allowing the company to double the recommended service intervals, from 2500 to 5000 miles.

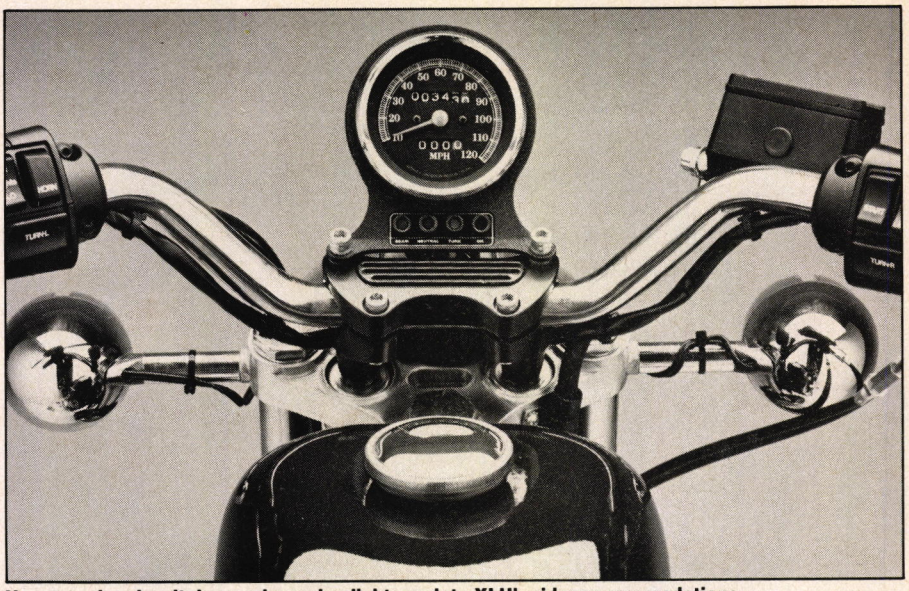
That's a fairly extensive list of changes, but Harley stopped short of replacing the Sportster's four-speed transmission. Harley spokesmen say fitting the XLH with a five-speed would have been prohibitively expensive, so the 883 uses the same transmission and ratios found in last year's Sportster. Yet while the mechanicals are the same, the shifting has taken a full step backward. Even with a firm boot, the transmission resists changing gears, and neutral is annoyingly elusive, often impossible to find without going to second gear and then to neutral. The shifting did improve slightly as the bike accumulated miles, but the Sportster's gearbox is a far cry from modern standards.

Continued

Just as manufacturing costs prevented the 883 from receiving a five-speed transmission, the same limitations also mean the XLH rumbles down the highway with last year's chassis. Although H-D redesigned the frame in 1981, the suspension is far from state-of-the-art, with no external adjustments on the fork, and a rear end that adjusts for preload only. The shock springs offer only three preload positions and a meager 3.3-inches of travel, which in turn mandates the same stiff springs found on last year's XLH.

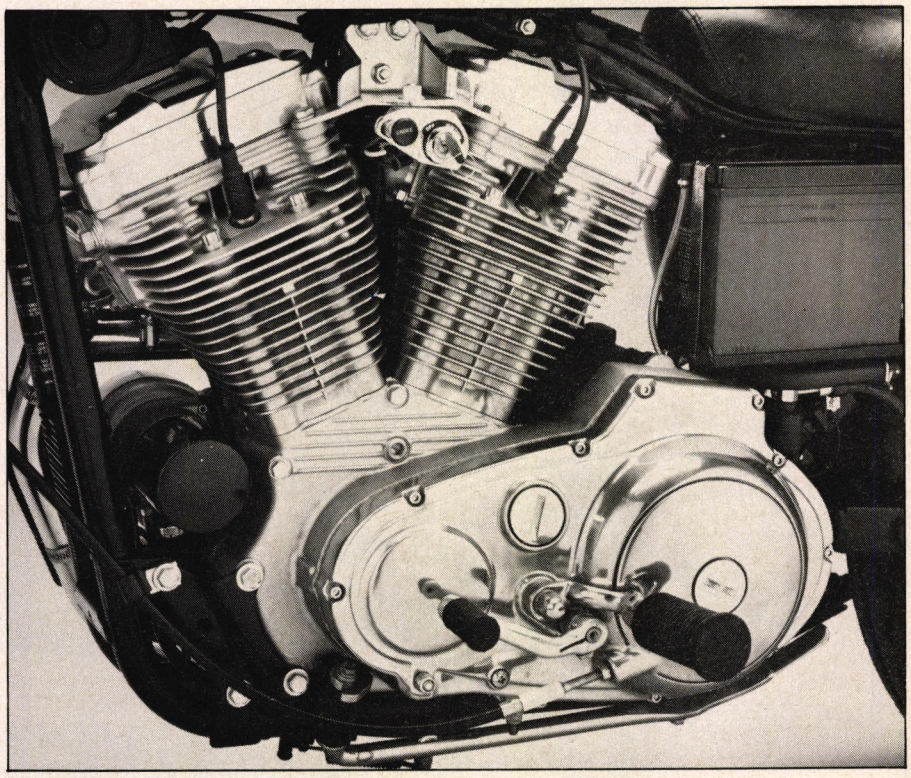
And as with last year's XLH, low-speed cruising best suits the suspension. Otherwise, the short-travel rear end bottoms over even moderately sized bumps, and smaller jolts get past the fork and shocks with irritating regularity. The suspension's shortcomings intrude on the 883's freeway ride, too, because the shocks fail to respond to expansion joints. What's more, the suspension's performance combines with the engine's raucous vibration and the short, overly soft saddle to make long trips a test of rider endurance. The Harley can be reasonably comfortable, but only if the pavement is billiard-table smooth, and if the rider is content to cruise at or near the Double Nickel. Otherwise, it's far off the pace of many Japanese cruisers in terms of comfort, and betters them only in its riding position.

But the Harley is neck-and-neck with the Japanese cruisers within its urban element, where its light, 467-pound weight gives the bike an agile, athletic feel. The Sportster's ergonomics complement that feel, too, because the low, fairly flat bar and forward-mounted footpegs place the rider in a slightly leaned-forward position that's ideal for trolling along neon-lit city streets. The XLH's riding position also helps it on a twisty road by allowing the rider to adopt a more aggressive stance than is the case with most other cruisers. The Sportster's light weight assists as well, and the steering is light, but not especially quick, while offering good stability. That's not to say an 883 pilot can



New turnsignal switches and warning lights update XLH's rider accommodations

Proof that more than just the motor went through the Evolution process.



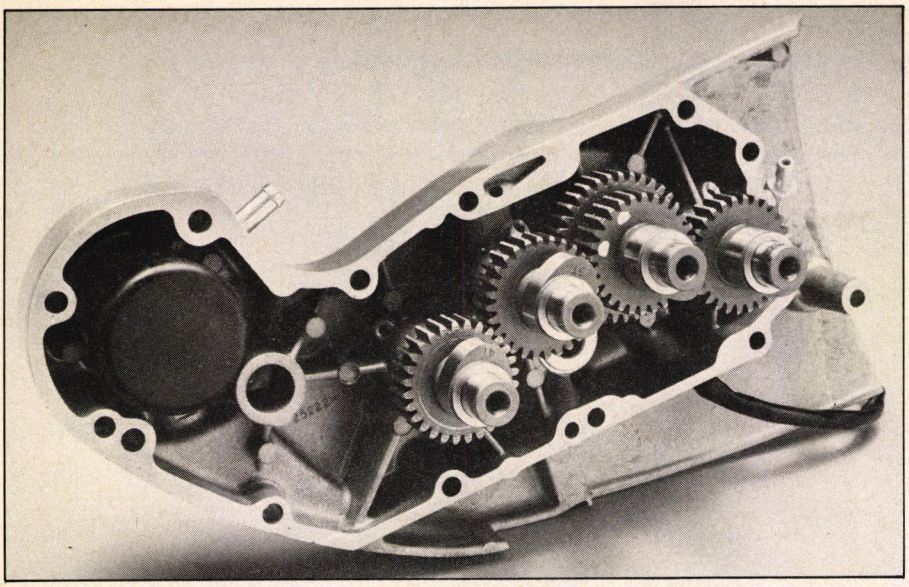
Sportster's top end looks like a carbon copy of the 1340 Evolution motor's

But with a "bathtub" combustion chamber, you can call it the Showerhead.

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 VIC HUBER

COMPARATIVE TEST DATA:

Make and Model	Quarter-Mile, sec/mph	Top Speed, mph	Weight, lbs.	Stopping Distance From 60 mph, ft.
Harley-Davidson XLH 883 Sportster-'86	14.045/92.40	106	467	131
Harley-Davidson XLH Sportster-'85	13.742/95.94	111	490	146
Honda VT1100C Shadow-'85	13.022/100.33	112	560	127
Suzuki VS700GLF Intruder-'85	12.998/101.01	112	442	132
Harley-Davidson FXRS Low Glide-'84	13.917/94.57	112	575	140
Harley-Davidson XLX-61-'83	13.459/95.94	106	488	128



Computer-matched camshaft gears provide tighter manufacturing tolerances

New technology battles an old Harley trait: mechanical noise.

show his heels to Interceptors or Ninjas, though; forcing the XLH down a backroad at speed uncovers some fork flex and a slight wallow. The bike feels much happier loping along at a moderate pace.

Should you use the throttle immoderately, though, the XLH's brakes can get you hauled down from speed. The 883 uses the same single-disc brakes, front and rear, found on the '85 XLH, and they offer excellent stopping power. Yet neither brake provides particularly good feel, and both require fairly high effort to make full use of their power.

High-effort controls have been a Harley trademark, and so has their sheer size. Riders with small hands might find the XLH's beefy controls awkward to use. A few ergonomic details *were* changed this year, though. Most riders will welcome Harley's redesigned turnsignal switches, which incorporate locking detents to keep the signals on; no longer do you have to hold the switch down. The 883's instrument panel received a face lift as well: There's now a neutral light, grouped with the oil-pressure, turnsignal and alternator warning lights below the speedometer. More telling are the detail considerations that *didn't* find their way onto the 883: There's no tachometer, passenger accommodations or second rearview mirror. The lack of such amenities directly points to Harley's philosophy of building the 883; clearly, the bike's retail price hung over the engineer's heads at every turn.

It didn't have to be that way, though; Harley could have simply dropped the price on the old cast-iron Sportster and come out ahead both in profits and design time. But by choosing that route, Harley would run the risk of turning off riders who might be more impressed with an updated, Evolution-style Sportster, than by a low price. And after the success of the Evolution-engine Big Twins, and the amount of interest they created among non-Harley riders, it makes sense that Harley do the same with the XLH. But unlike the FX-series—which was updated first with a new chassis, then with an Evolution motor—H-D chose to upgrade the XLH's engine first, and leave the chassis basically unchanged.

And it's that carry-over chassis that undermines the 883 XLH the most: The harsh suspension, uncomfortable saddle and vibration overshadow the Sportster's improvements. Harley tried to bring the bike up to modern specs, but the preoccupation with price forced the firm to focus solely on the engine, leaving the rest of the Sportster solidly rooted in the past. As a result, the 883 Sportster doesn't represent the same great leap forward that the made some of H-D's Evolution Big Twins so appealing. All of which leaves the 883 Evolution Sportster in the precarious position of being—at best—marginally better than its iron-engine predecessor, and only slightly less expensive. And that approach seems to confuse pricing with progress. •

Nits:

- No centerstand.
- No toolkit.
- No underseat storage.

Picks:

- Thumb-operated throttle lock is convenient.
- Battery and engine oil level are easy to check.

Ride Review

• Judging by the rumors I heard before its introduction, the Evolution Sportster sounded like the kind of bike that could get me down on my knees in front of my loan officer. If Harley rubber-mounted the engine, I thought, and gave the bike a five-speed transmission like it did with the V² Big Twins, and a dual disc front brake, then the Sportster could be a Harley capable of luring thousands of riders into the fold of The Faithful.

But now that I've ridden the 883, I'm disappointed in it. The solid-mount engine shakes almost as badly as the old cast-iron motor did, and has less torque and horsepower. The transmission is still a four-speed, and the single disc front brake's stopping power is unremarkable. I'm disappointed in the 883 Sportster—not so much for what it is, but for what it *could* have been. *—Jerry Smith*

• Harley-Davidson managed to pull off a couple of tricks here I didn't think were possible. First, the company managed to make the Sportster look even better, which is no mean feat, because to me the old XLH was the best looking bike in existence. The second bit of magic isn't exactly what I had in mind: When you consider that the cast-iron XL produced roughly equal amounts of horsepower and vibration, the fact that H-D spent time and money to get a motor that produces a little bit *less* of both isn't exactly stunning. That's the kind of return on an investment I'd expect from the Pentagon.

So it seems once you get past the 883's looks, there's not much left. As disappointing as the new Sportster is, though, I have to admit I'd still like to own one—but only to have someone ride it back and forth in front of me. *—Jim Miller*

• Harley-Davidson missed the mark by not putting the 883 engine in an XR750-lookalike chassis. After all, the XR evolved from the Sportster, and I think it's about time Harley-D reminded the public of that fact; at least, more clearly than was the case with the XR1000. But no; the new V² engine ended up in a ho-hum motorcycle. Oh, sure, the most recent Sporty vee-twin displays the rumble that makes *any* Harley-Davidson stand out in a crowd of inline-fours and vee-fours from *you know where,* but the 883's personality ends with its exhaust note. Then it's back to the black-and-white drabness of the XLH's chassis.

Instead, give me an *orange*-black-and-white XLH—like the XR750. Because the Sportster is one streetbike that deserves the recognition it's earned: Recognition won on the racetrack.

—Dain Gingerelli

CYCLE GUIDE SPECIFICATIONS

Harley-Davidson XLH 883 Sportster — street

MANUFACTURER: Harley-Davidson Motor Company Inc., 3700 West Juneau Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: $3995 for solid colors; $4070 for candy colors

ENGINE

Type . . . . . four-stroke 45 degree tandem vee-twin
Valve arrangement . . . . . pushrod-operated overhead valves
Bore and stroke . . . . . 76.2mm x 96.8mm
Displacement 882.9cc
Compression ratio 9.0:1
Engine redline . . . . . 6000 rpm
Carburetion . . . . . one 34mm Keihin butterfly-type with accelerator pump
Air filter . . . . . washable oiled foam element
Lubrication . . . . . dry sump
Starting system . . . . . electric only
Ignition . . . . . transistorized breakerless
Charging system . . . . . 12-volt; 264-watt alternator, voltage regulator/rectifier, 19-ampere-hour battery

DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive . . . . . triple-row chain; 1.735:1 ratio
Clutch . . . . . wet, multi-plate
Final drive . . . . #530 O-ring chain (⅝-in. pitch, ⅜-in. width); 2.286:1 (48/21) ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.522	10.000	7.52
II	1.826	7.243	10.38
III	1.382	5.480	13.72
IV	1.000	3.966	18.96

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front . . . . . Showa, 35mm stanchion tube diameter/ 6.0 in. (152mm)
Rear . . . . . dual Showa shocks, 3-position adjustable spring preload range/3.3 in. (85mm)

BRAKES

Front . . . . . single-action hydraulic caliper, 11.3-in. (288mm) effective disc diameter
Rear . . . . . single-action hydraulic caliper, 11.2-in. (284mm) effective disc diameter

TIRES

Front . . . . . MJ90-19 Dunlop K181
Rear . . . . . MT90-16 Dunlop K181

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

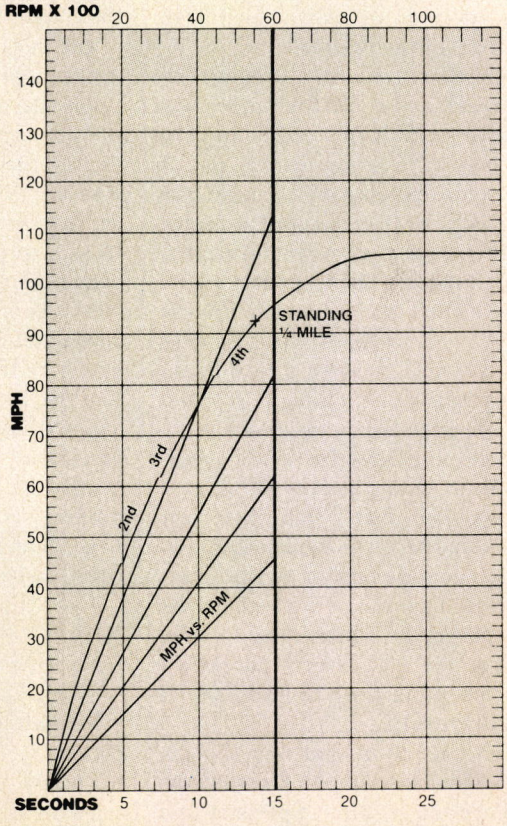
Weight . . . . . 467 lbs. (211.8kg)
Weight distribution . . . . . 45.6% front, 54.4% rear
Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) . . . . . 900 lbs. (408kg)
Load capacity (with full fuel tank) . . . . . 420 lbs. (191kg)
Wheelbase . . . . . 58.7 to 60.0 in. (1492 to 1523mm)
Seat height . . . . . 30.4 in. (772mm)
Handlebar width . . . . . 28.6 in. (727mm)
Footpeg height . . . . . 13.5 in. (342mm)
Ground clearance . . . . . 5.8 in. (147mm), at sidestand
Steering head angle . . . . . 29.7 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail . . . . . 4.50 in. (114mm)
Frame . . . . . tubular mild steel, double front downtubes
Oil capacity . . . . . 3.0 qt. (2.8/)
Fuel tank . . . . . steel, 2.1 gal. (8.0/), including 0.4 gal. (1.5/) reserve
Instrumentation . . . . . speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero

PERFORMANCE

Fuel consumption range . . . . . 37 to 67 mpg (16 to 28 km/l)
Average fuel consumption . . . . . 52 mpg (22 km/l)
Cruising range, maximum . . . . . 78 to 141 miles (126 to 226km)
Cruising range, reserve only . . . 15 to 26 miles (24 to 42km)
Speedometer error, 30 mph indicated . . . . . 31 mph actual
Speedometer error, 55 mph indicated . . . . . 56 mph actual
Best 1/4-mile acceleration . . . . . 14.045 sec., 92.40 mph (149 kph)
Top speed (observed) . . . . . 106 mph (171 kph)
Stopping distance from 30 mph . . . . . 36 ft. (11.0m)
Stopping distance from 60 mph . . . . . 131 ft. (39.9m)

WARRANTY: 12 months, unlimited mileage

AVAILABLE COLORS: Black, Signal Red, Candy Blue, Candy Red



All weight and measurements are taken with machine unladen and fuel tank empty.

TIME-WARP TOURING:

1952 Vincent Black Shadow

That's "The Vincent" to you, fella.

BY JIM MILLER

Everybody deserves to have it happen at least once; to have the perfect combination of the right bike, the right place and the right time; to be the guy you'd envy if you saw yourself riding by. I know, because it happened once to me. The bike was a 1952 Vincent Black Shadow, the place was Lake George, New York, and the time was smack in the middle of the Aspencade touring rally. At a gathering where an axle-to-axle chrome Gold Wing barely rates a second glance, the Vincent swiveled heads like a puppeteer with marionettes.

Obviously, the Vincent isn't a bike for the shy, retiring type. It never took more than two minutes to gather a crowd around the Black Shadow once it was parked, and most of the time I was being pelted with questions before it even chuffed to a halt. While that's not uncommon with an antique or classic, the rarity of these English vee-twins guaranteed the queries didn't start with, "My (choose one: uncle, cousin, upstairs maid) had one of those, and. . . ." In fact, Leland Munroe, the Newton, Massachusetts, lawyer who owned the Black Shadow I was riding, was the first person I'd met who actually owned one of them—in fact, he owns three. Yet no matter how long the Q&A session lasted, every one ended the same way; someone would ask, sheepishly, "Can we hear it run?"

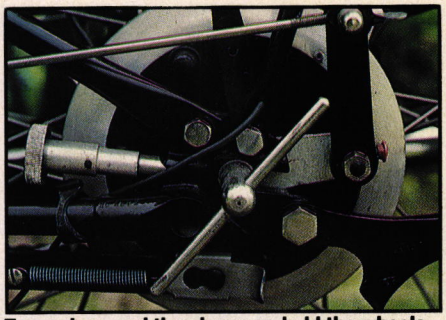
Now, kickstarting a 998cc vee-twin isn't exactly as easy as stepping off a curb, but I didn't mind. First off, the Vincent usually started with one kick, and second, I probably wanted to hear it more than anyone else. Nothing can compare with a vee-twin's exhaust note, and the dollops of noise erupting from the Black Shadow seemed almost tangible. Munroe's bike sported a BSA Gold Star's muffler, which gave the motor a deliciously throaty bark

Continued

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 TOM RILES

Cloisonné and polished aluminum accents

Even the steering damper glistens.

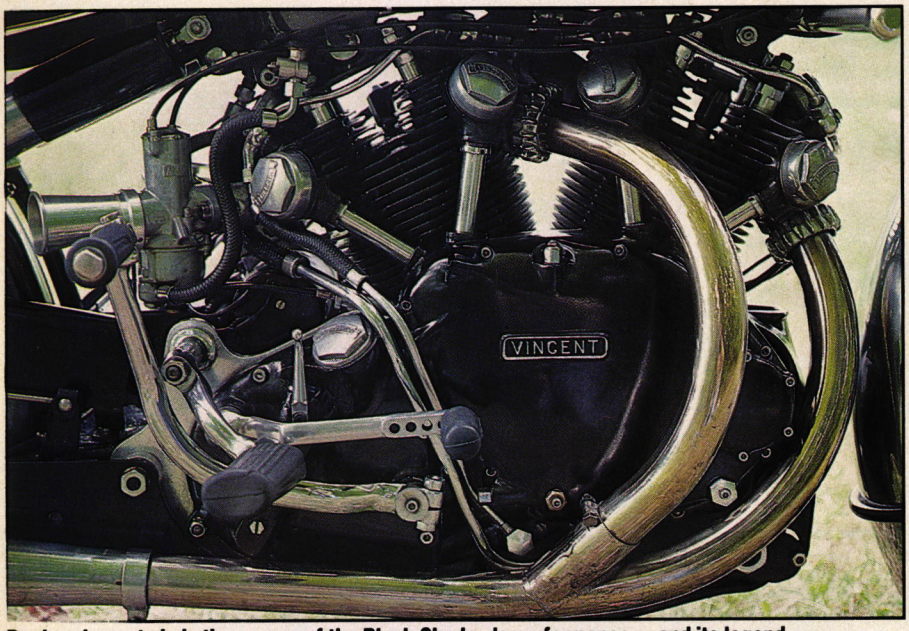


Tommybars and thumbscrews hold the wheels

Quick-changes are no enduro exclusive.

Black Shadow, Rapide or Black Lightning

It was still "The Vincent."



Dual-carb vee-twin is the source of the Black Shadow's performance—and its legend

Combining 998cc of rowdiness and refinement.

Vincent offers spartan appointments

But the 150-mph speedo tells it all.

that was just slightly louder than stock. But if you're thinking that sort of noise is somehow out of character—that an expensive English motorcycle should produce some kind of prim and proper muffled wheeze—forget it. In the case of the Vincent's exhaust, think London bawdy house, not High Court estate.

The uncorked exhaust fits the Vincent's character perfectly, too, because the 998cc vee-twin dominates the motorcycle, both in look and performance. Further, it's delightful to ride a bike with a motor tuned to satisfy its own requirements; not the EPA's. The two people responsible for creating the Black Shadow, Phil Vincent and Philip Irving, intended the big-bore vee-twins as high-speed, long-distance machines, and a marathon runner can't make it with clogged sinuses. In stock form, their offspring was no slouch, either: In 1970, almost 15 years after the factory ceased production, the Black Shadow still ranked as the one of the fastest street-legal production motorcycles in the

world, and even now its engine performance isn't too far off that of a VT1100C Honda Shadow or an H-D Sportster.

As entertaining as that rowdy motor is, it doesn't qualify as the best part of the bike. Riding it is the best part, and that's where the Black Shadow parts company with many other antiques or classics. Because once you've fielded all the questions and the crowds have scattered, and it's time to ride off into the sunset, most antique bikes lose a lot of their allure, revealing themselves for exactly what they are: Clunky, slow, wobbly motorcycles that aren't all that entertaining to ride. But the Vincent doesn't require an audience; taking it over a twisty bit of two-lane provides all the entertainment you could ask for. The steering is slow enough that when you're heading for an apex you could wire ahead for a reservation, yet the bike is surprisingly stable, particularly in long sweepers.

Oddly enough, the source of that stability can be traced to the engine, because the massive vee-twin not only dominates the look and feel of the bike, it also dominates it physically, forming the major part of the frame. The alloy, hydraulically damped Girdraulic fork fastens to a backbone/oil-tank section bolted to the heads, and the triangulated swingarm pivots off the back of the transmission; there is no frame per se. As a result, despite its enormous engine and gas tank, the Vincent is about the size of a modern middleweight.

Such modern dimensions don't mean the vintage element is missing with the Black Shadow; the chassis and suspension provide all the antique feel a boy can stand. The ride could be politely described as "firm"; on a rough road it will beat you as mercilessly as a New York mugger. Plus, alloy or no, the Girdraulic fork gives the steering a heavy, awkward feel, and requires a firm hand to turn the bike at a walking pace. And if there's one area in which the Vincent's performance is closer to mythological than legendary, it's in braking. I knew the twin front drum brakes were working more by their moaning than by the deceleration.

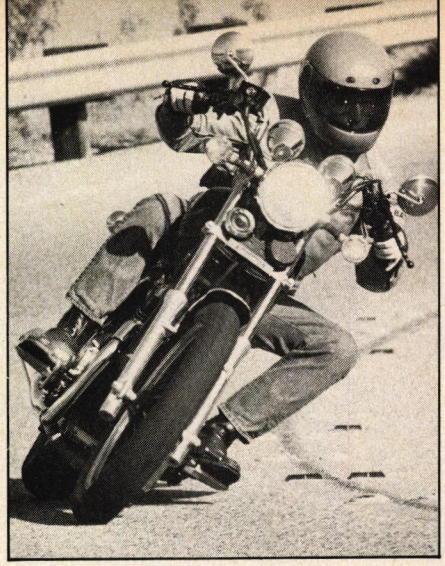
And I couldn't have cared less; most of the time I was having too much fun to notice. All it took was a single flick of the wrist, and as the bike arced through a corner I'd promptly forget about the marginal brakes, punishing suspension and the requisite English oil leak spitting 40-weight on my right boot. For a confirmed motorcycling fanatic, not that much has changed in the past 32 years—the machinery undeniably has gotten better, faster, more comfortable and more reliable, but the kinesthetics have changed only in degree, not in kind.

Those undiluted sensations are exactly what made the Vincent so appealing, too, because the raw feeling of motorcycling, coupled with the Black Shadow's brutish vee-twin presence and legendary status, made the bike that much larger than life. Even though the reality is somewhat less than the legend, I'll still be envious the next time I see one. It's just that the next time I see someone riding a Vincent, at least I'll know *why* I envy him. •

ROAD TEST:

Kawasaki 454 LTD

Start with it, stay with it.

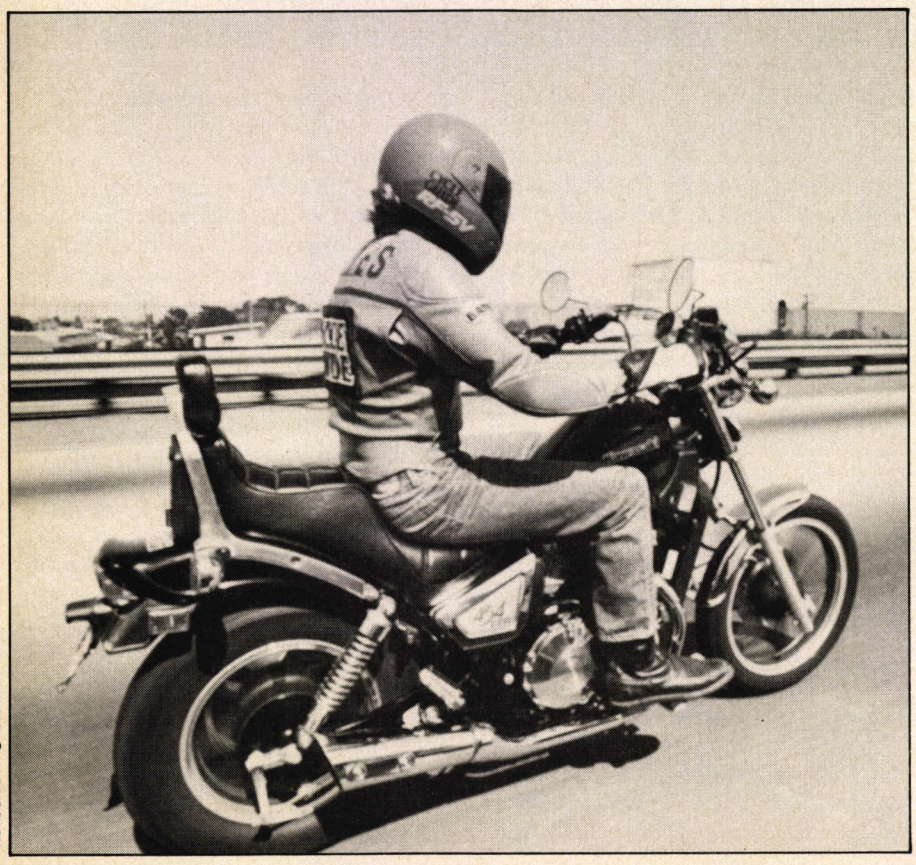


• All too often, the entry-level motorcyclist is faced with a beggar's choice when it comes to choosing his first bike. He can buy a small, slow motorcycle that he'll probably outgrow as soon as he gets past the here's-the-clutch, here's-the-brake stage, or he can opt for a bigger, heavier, more intimidating bike he can grow into—providing he gets through the learning process in one piece.

Kawasaki has one solution to that dilemma—the 454 LTD. Because even though Kawasaki bills the LTD as an entry-level bike, that doesn't mean it's a dull, slow motorcycle fit only for learning the rudiments of two-wheel survival. And although it's a full-size motorcycle, it won't fight you two falls out of three going up on the centerstand. Further, there's a lot about this middleweight performance-custom that will appeal to experienced riders, too, such as its emphasis on low maintenance and its powerful, high-revving motor. Indeed, if you're unaccustomed to associating the word "performance" with a middleweight Twin, grabbing a handful of the LTD's throttle will change your thinking in short order. The Kawasaki accelerates harder than some motorcycles half again its size.

The LTD owes its muscle in part to another member of the Kawasaki clan—the 900 Ninja—and proves that horsepower runs in the family. In fact, Kawasaki calls the LTD's powerplant "half a Ninja." And, despite the obvious differences, the two engines differ only slightly in specifications; the LTD's dual overhead cams are milder than the Ninja's, and its compression ratio is lower (10.7:1 for the 454, compared to 11:1). But in most other respects the LTD's counterbalanced, liquid-cooled engine is practically a Ninja powerplant split right down the middle. Bore and stroke are the same for both engines, for example, as are valve sizes, included valve angles and carburetors; the 34mm semi-flat-slide Keihins look as if they'd been pulled straight off the big four and bolted onto the twin.

But hardware isn't the only thing the 900 passed on to its smaller sibling; the LTD also inherited outstanding acceleration. There's plenty of power on tap, too, from the basement of the powerband right up to the 10,000-rpm penthouse. And yet the gutsy twin's class-leading performance doesn't cover a cantankerous nature, because the LTD starts easily and warms quickly, offering crisp carburetion and rapid throttle response. What's more, the engine is smooth, with only a marginal amount of vibration emanating through the footpegs Kawasaki rubber-mounted the 454's motor in its chassis, supplementing the engine's gear-driven counterbalancer for vibration-control, and the two do a good job of isolating the rider from vibration, whether he's puttering around town or using every ounce of the "half-Ninja's" performance.



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 MIKE PONS

The LTD's powerplant won't make you pay for your thrills with high-dollar maintenance bills, either. Adjusting the screw-and-locknut tappets requires no special tools, and the Ninja-style automatic cam-chain tensioner needs no periodic service. Plus, the 454 uses a final-drive belt instead of a chain, and Kawasaki's experience with the system on other bikes indicates the belt will last an average of 20,000 miles before it needs to be replaced. In addition, Kawasaki claims the 40mm-wide belt needs to be adjusted only two or three times in the first 1000 miles, and from that point on is virtually maintenance-free, requiring no lubrication or further adjustment.

But economy and practicality don't have to be homely. So while Kawasaki's engineers were giving the LTD a low-maintenance personality, the stylists were busy equipping it with a high-fashion profile, decking the bike out in the latest boulevard duds. For an entry-level bike, the 454's styling makes a certain amount of sense, too, because a cruiser's marching orders should include a low seat height. And with a saddle height of 29.3 inches, the LTD keeps that part of the bargain, ensuring that riders short of experience—or inseam—can plant both feet firmly on the ground at stoplights. Still, the 454 doesn't offer the best seat in the house, and despite a trend among cruisers—Yamaha's 700 Maxim X and Suzuki's Intruder, for example—toward less extreme seating positions, the LTD's laid-back perch is one of the most radical examples of cruiser ergonomics around. As a result, the extremely forward-mounted footpegs and swept-back handlebar discourage all but the shortest hops, especially on the freeway. And the stepped seat, although well-padded, leaves a rider little room to move

Continued

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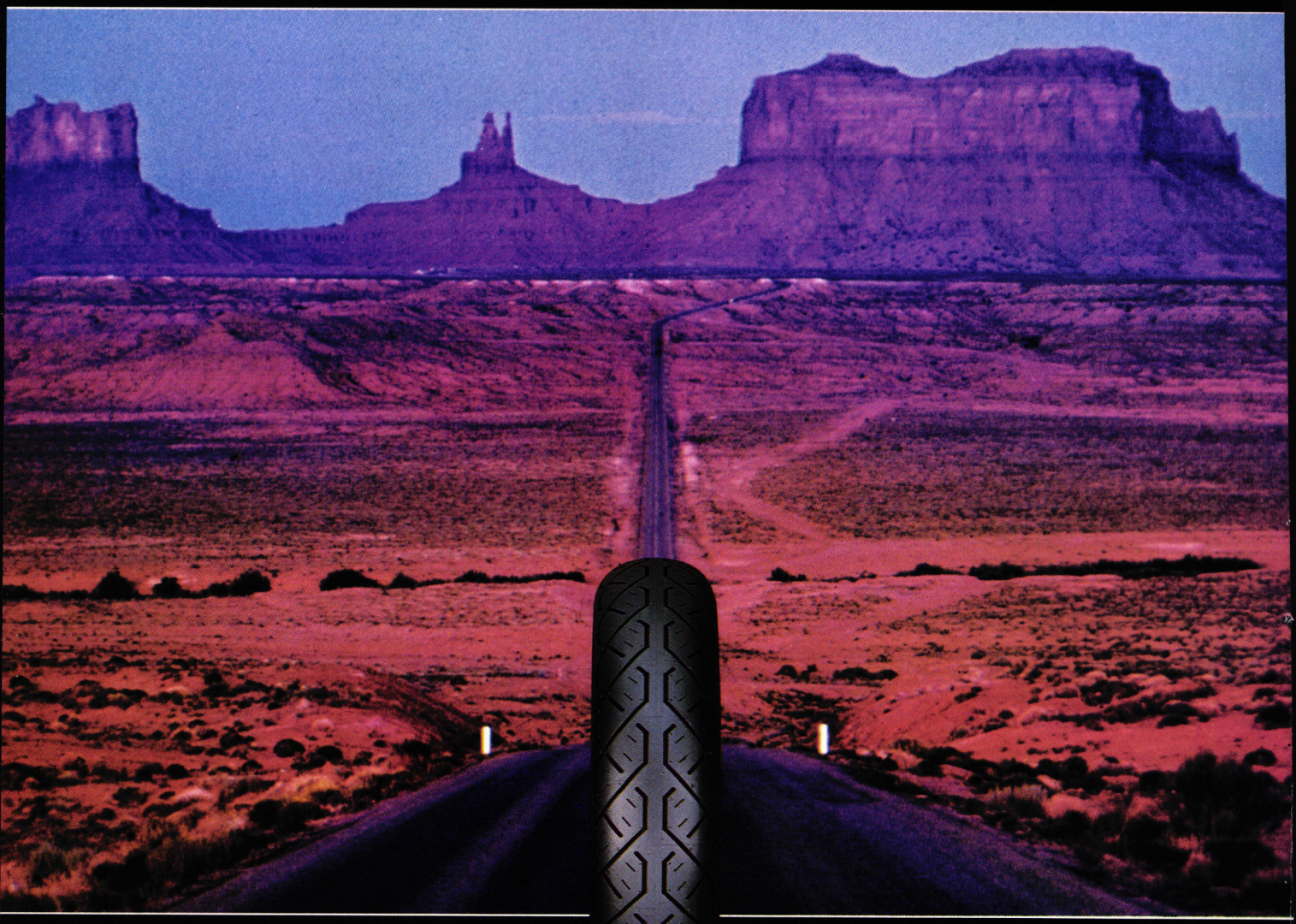

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Clockwise foreground to background: *Cruzer, Cassini, and Bomber.*

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Clockwise, foreground to background: *Supra, Paladin Jeans, and Ultra.*

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around to relieve saddle fatigue.

Like the seating position, the LTD's suspension lacks versatility, too. The shocks adjust for spring preload only and the fork is air-adjustable, and although both ends of the bike are tuned for a soft, boulevard-style ride, the suspension offers mixed results. The 454 rides well over small-to-medium bumps, but serves up a slightly choppy ride over freeway expansion joints. Plus, although Kawasaki calls the 454 a performance-cruiser, the soft suspension won't encourage a rider to try jetting along canyon roads. The shocks need stiffer springs and more rebound damping for such antics, and while the fork works best at 0 psi (Kawasaki's recommended pressure) the front end dives noticeably during hard braking. Bumping up the fork's air pressure reduces dive somewhat, but you're still left with a fork that flexes perceptibly at sporting speeds through corners, or if you clamp on the powerful front disc brake.

Steer the LTD away from the twisties, however, and its user-friendly nature all but eclipses its backroad handling deficiencies. Around town, riders of all skill levels will appreciate how easily they can thread their way through the urban battle zone. The LTD feels far lighter than its 427-pound weight might suggest, and the low-effort steering makes the bike feel pleasantly nimble. Plus, the engine's idle-to-redline powerband and clean carburetion combine with the clutch's light lever-pull and broad engagement band to make inner-city riding a pleasure.

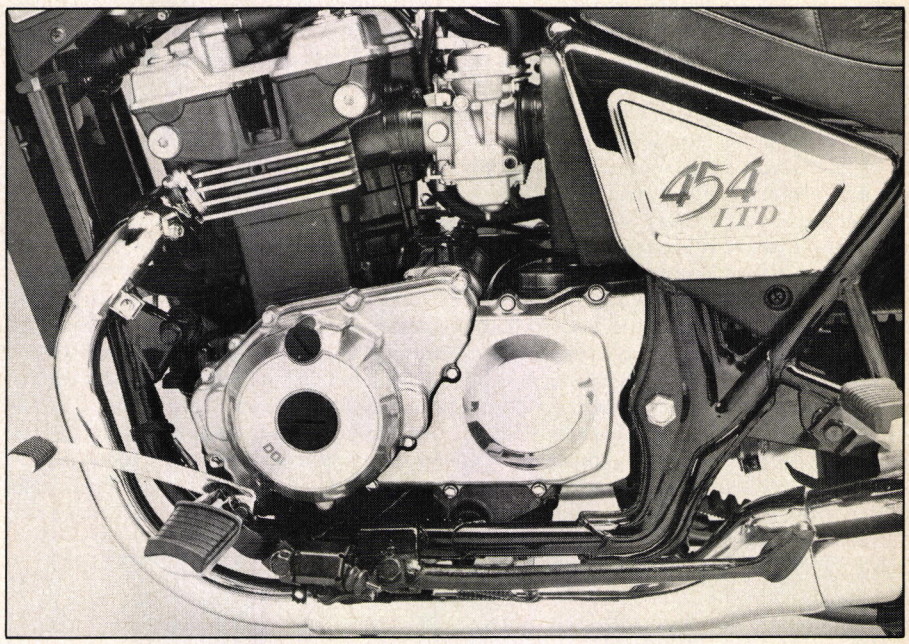
It's that accommodating, easy-to-ride nature that makes the LTD's appeal cut across the traditional lines that separate the tyro from the old hand. The Kawasaki offers the beginner a stylish, economical buy-in to motorcycling, with a high-tech engine powerful enough to keep him entertained long after he's learned the rudiments of riding. Nor will experienced riders feel short-changed; the 454 engine's Ninja heritage and resultant level of performance make certain of that. In fact, the LTD just might make veteran riders wish they could go back and start all over again.

—Jerry Smith

KAWASAKI 454 LTD

Importer: Kawasaki Motors Corp.
2009 E. Edinger Ave.
Santa Ana, California 92711

Category	street
Suggested retail price	$1999
Engine type	four-stroke vertical twin
Valve arrangement	double overhead camshafts, four valves per cylinder
Bore and stroke	72.5mm x 55.0mm
Displacement	454.1cc
Compression ratio	10.7:1
Carburetion	two 34mm Keihin semi-flat-slide constant-vacuum
Gearbox	6-speed
Front fork/wheel travel	Showa air-spring, 36mm stanchion tube diameter/ 5.8 in. (147mm)
Rear shocks/wheel travel	dual Showa, 5-position adjustable spring preload/4.5 in. (115mm)
Weight	427 lbs. (193.7kg)
Wheelbase	58.1 to 59.1 in. (1476 to 1502mm)
Seat height	29.3 in. (745mm)
Steering head angle	31.5 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail	5.47 in. (139mm)
Best ¼-mile acceleration	13.386 sec., 97.08 mph (156 kph)
Top speed (observed)	102 mph (164kph)
Stopping distance from 60 mph	125 ft. (38.1m)
Fuel consumption	37 to 53 mpg (16 to 23 km/l)
Warranty	12 months, unlimited mileage
Available colors	Ebony or Candy Persimmon Red



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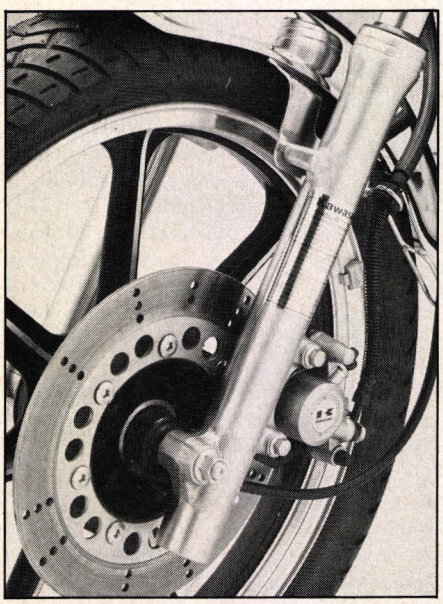
Kawasaki calls the heart of the LTD "half a Ninja"

There's nothing half-hearted about the 454's performance, though.



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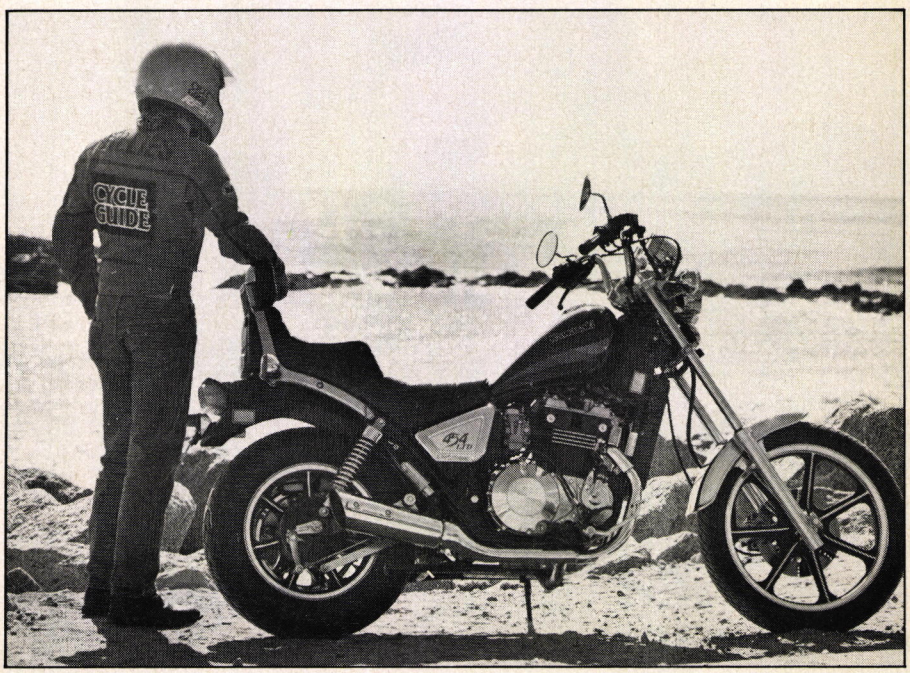
LTD's fork is long on style

But short on rigidity.



ROAD TEST:

BMW R80

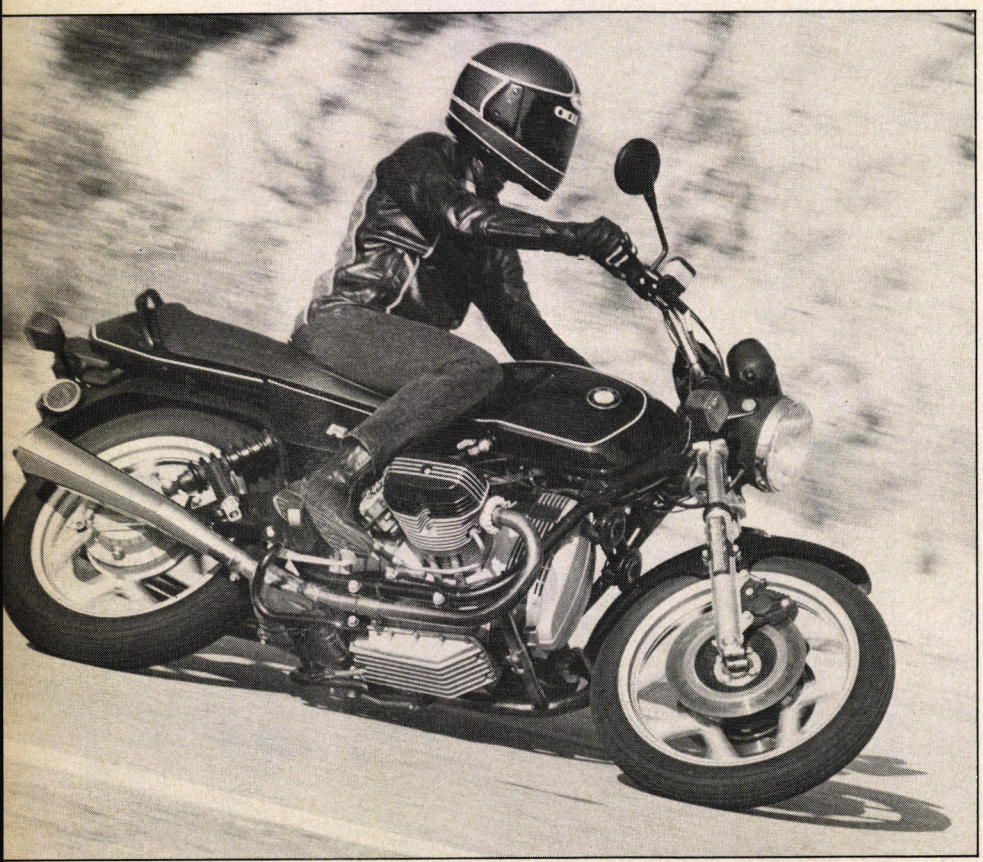
Motorcycle: one, shaft-drive, two-cylinder, general-purpose.

• Certain motorcycles can be judged by the type of visions they evoke—touring bikes conjure up fantasies about distant lands, and sportbikes produce imaginary blasts through endless corners. By that criterion, though, BMW's R80 requires a vivid imagination, because the bike doesn't inspire visions of footpegs skimming over the tarmac, or a Grand Canyon vista after a 400-mile day. The R80 doesn't produce such vivid flights of fancy because it doesn't pretend to be anything more than a basic motorcycle, a two-wheel do-everything device.

That unassuming character is an aspect carried over from last year's R80S/T model, which the new R80 replaces. The S/T was a streetified version of BMW's dual-purpose R80 G/S, and the R80 takes the process a step further. In the bargain, the R80 inherited the S/T's Monolever single-shock chassis design and the basic 783cc flat-twin engine. Otherwise, though, Bayerische Motoren Werke embarked on a campaign of refinements to create the R80. The front suspension, for instance, has been upgraded, with larger 38.4mm stanchion tubes replacing the S/T's 36mm units, accompanied by a 25mm-diameter axle (5mm larger than before) and a cast-aluminum fork brace. The venerable flat-twin came in for its share of modifications, too, with special attention paid to noise reduction. To that end, the R80 got redesigned rocker-shaft bearings, and a new two-into-two exhaust system.

But the changes don't take away from the R80's basic intent; it's designed as an all-around, do-anything motorcycle, with simplicity as its keynote. That uncomplicated approach is reflected in the Boxer's suspension, too; the BMW-built fork sports no external adjustments, and the rear shock adjusts for preload only. And while the lack of adjustability isn't necessarily an inherent liability, it becomes one on the R80, because the spring rates are mismatched, with the rear fairly stiff and the front just *too* soft.

Nonetheless, the suspension's performance doesn't noticeably detract from the bike's all-around capabilities. A commuter, for example, will welcome the supple fork, because it responds exceptionally well to minor pavement irregularities, and the stiffish rear suspension doesn't intrude *too* much on the bike's amenable nature. Moreover, the flat-twin handles lunch-box commuting quite well, too, though it is remarkably cold-blooded for the first mile or so, and will run only on full choke. But once the engine warms, the two Bing 32mm CV carburetors produce instantaneous throttle response, right from idle to the 7400-rpm redline. That idle-to-redline range also describes the R80's powerband, though the engine feels slightly more eager above 5500 rpm. Yet, regardless of rpm, there's never an abundance of horsepower on tap; bikes with half the displacement will smoke it in a contest of speed.



PHOTOGRAPHY © DAVID DEWHURST

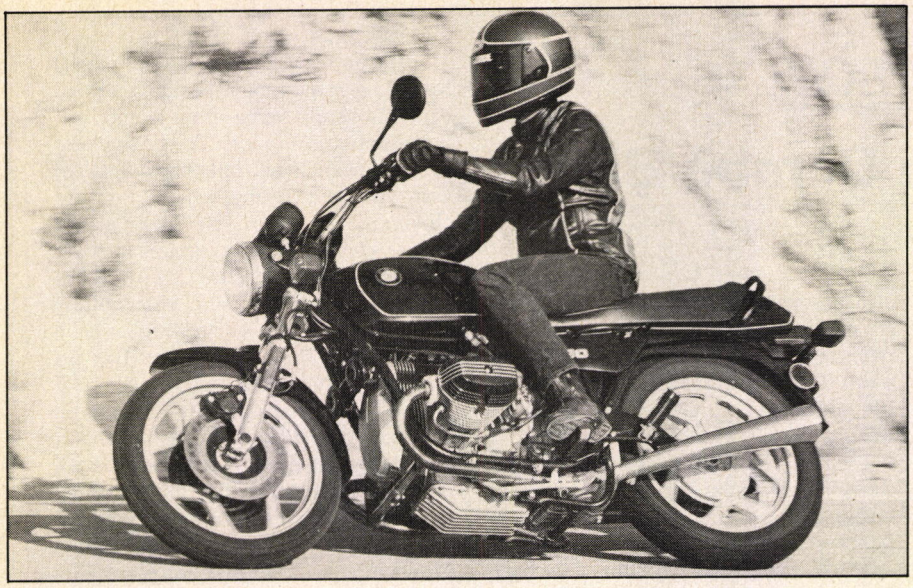
Still, at 439 pounds, the R80's light weight helps compensate for the motor's relative lack of punch, and makes slipping through traffic strictly a low-effort affair. In fact, with the exception of a set of over-enthusiastic throttle-return springs, all of the R80's controls—clutch, shifting and steering—are decidedly low effort. The same goes for the brakes, too: The Brembo calipers and dual front discs require no more than one finger for most stopping situations. Combined with the bike's weight, the R80's ease of operation makes it as accommodating in town as a garment-district tailor, and the tall handlebar and firm seat provide a relaxed riding position for knocking around town.

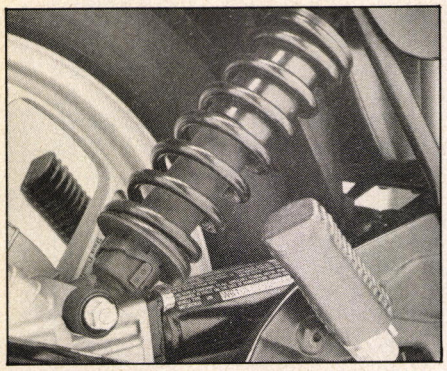
BMW's do-it-all formula isn't quite as successful on the freeway, where the handlebar bend places your wrists at an awkward angle for extended rides, and puts you a bit too upright to lean into the wind blast. In addition, the firm rear suspension causes the bike to hobbyhorse on expansion joints, and the contoured, saddle-shape section on the seat is placed too far forward to be useful for over-6-footers. To its credit, the bike handles freeway stints far better than many specialized sportbikes or cruisers, and its lack of vibration at normal freeway speeds means your hands and feet won't go numb after a short ride on the Superslab. Wick the engine up a bit and the Boxer does produce some buzzing, though; above 4000 rpm the footpegs and square-section grips tingle annoyingly.

While it's easy to keep the motor out of its buzzy range on the freeway, for fast backroad work it's best to keep the engine spinning to get a good drive out of corners. Though the motor isn't *that* particular about gear selection, when you're cutting through the twisties it's happiest above 5500, where it makes its best power.

Dealing with the R80's chassis takes a bit more finesse, though. The stiff rear spring does little to control the shaft-drive's chassis jacking, particularly when the throttle is wicked open or closed in the lower gears. That typical Boxer characteristic calls for the usual BMW riding style, too: The fast track with the R80 requires you to get your shifting and braking out of the way *before* entering a turn. Then, pitch the bike in and dial up the throttle to lift the bike on its suspension. Such tactics ensure the R80 has plenty of cornering clearance, and mean you have to lean *way* over to get anything to drag.

Once you adjust to the power-on cornering style, the Beemer can hustle down a fast stretch of two-lane at a respectable speed, particularly through extremely tight sections, where the light weight and wide handlebar make the bike easy to pitch into turns. And through rough corners, the softly sprung fork soaks up bumps without

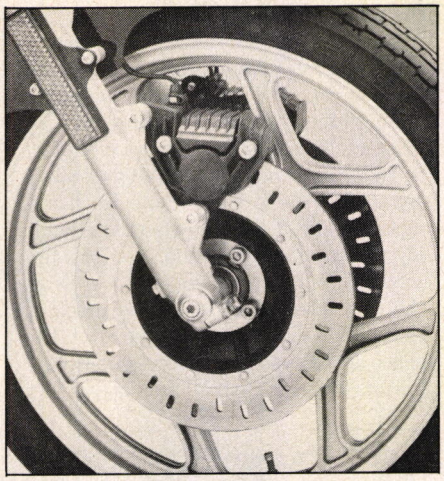




PHOTOGRAPHY © VIC HUBER

Monolever at rear adjusts for preload only

A singular feature for the latest R80.



Stouter fork, dual discs mark '85 R80

New pieces, but the same G-P intent.

knocking the R80 off line, though the same soft springing also allows the front end to drop like a poleaxed mule when you snap the brakes on hard. Moreover, the BMW's front brake refuses to fade, even during hard sport riding, but it lacks sufficient feel to gauge lockup point, which not only intrudes on fast street riding, but also accounts for the R80's relatively long, 148-foot panic-stops from 60 mph.

But the R80 isn't intended simply as a twisty-road Q-ship; it's meant to be all things to all riders, and makes versatility its virtue. So while many current motorcycles are more competent in their own areas of specialization, they also wind up more limited than the R80 outside their specific arenas.

Yet even those who agree with the R80's general-purpose role might not accept the impedimenta that's included with BMW ownership. Beyond a doubt, it's the best of the flat-twins, though that statement carries with it all the traits—good or bad—that people associate with air-cooled BMWs. Those who consider them to be hopelessly anachronistic won't be dissuaded, but for those who appreciate the simplicity and light weight of these German twins, they don't come any better than this. You just have to supply your own fantasies, that's all. —*Jim Miller*

BMW R80

Importer: BMW North America Inc.
BMW Plaza
Montvale, New Jersey 07645

Category	street
Suggested retail price	$4300
Engine type	four-stroke horizontally opposed twin
Valve arrangement	pushrod-operated overhead valves
Bore and stroke	84.0mm x 70.6mm
Displacement	782.5cc
Compression ratio	8.2:1
Carburetion	two 32mm Bing constant-vacuum
Gearbox	5-speed
Front fork/wheel travel	BMW, 38.4mm stanchion tube diameter/6.5 in. (166mm)
Rear shock/wheel travel	Boge, 4-position adjustable spring preload/4.1 in. (103mm)
Weight	439 lbs. (199.1kg)
Wheelbase	57.2 in. (1453mm)
Seat height	32.0 in. (813mm)
Steering head angle	28.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail	4.72 in. (120mm)
Best ¼-mile acceleration	13.357 sec., 98.36 mph (158 kph)
Top speed (observed)	114 mph (183kph)
Stopping distance from 60 mph	148 ft. (45.1m)
Fuel consumption	37 to 52 mpg (16 to 22 km/l)
Warranty	three years, unlimited mileage
Available colors	Black or Colorado Red

MARZOCCHI

SHOCKING SUMMER SALE!

Due to the strong U.S. dollar, Marzocchi Strada gas shocks are reduced $20 for the rest of the summer! Take advantage of this sale to give your bike the dampening and ride control that the factory forgot. Total separation of gas and oil eliminates suspension fade completely. A lifetime, limited warranty guarantees Strada shocks will last the lifetime of your bike. Available for most twin shock motorcycles. Summer sale price $139, effective until August 31, 1985. Normal price $159. Supplied complete with springs, preload adjuster, and service manual. CALL 1-800-523-2522; IN PA CALL (215) 672-9100.

COSMOPOLITAN MOTORS
301 JACKSONVILLE RD.
HATBORO, PA 19040

Motorcycle Mechanics Institute
2844 W. Deer Valley Rd., Phx., AZ 85027
(602) 869-9644
☐ V.A. Info ☐ Financial Aid Info. CG
Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State ____ Zip ____
Phone _____ Age ____

PRODUCT EVALUATION:

Vetter Bagman Combo Bag

A duffel by any other name. . . .

• It used to be that "soft luggage" for motorcycles usually meant little more than a duffel bag and bungee cords. It was a slightly crude arrangement, but the duffel also was supremely easy to use; just strap it on and ride off into the sunset. Now, though, the market is awash in soft luggage, but all too often the pieces are specialized devices, with arcane mounting systems and multiple pockets, compartments and zippers. The simplicity of the age-old duffel bag, it seems, has been lost to progress.

But Bagman remembers the duffel, and has revived it in the form of the Combo Bag. Bagman updated the design, too, transforming what was a cylinder of canvas into a roughly rectangular bag made of Cordura nylon. The Combo Bag is slightly downsized, as well, compared to the original, measuring 10-by-8-by-9-inches, and offering a claimed capacity of 22 liters. All of that space is contained in the bag's main compartment, too, which is accessible through a single zipper, and supported by foam panels on the bottom and ends. There's also a small, zippered external pocket for small-item storage, but even with the modern updates of the foam stiffeners and extra pocket, the Combo Bag—like it's duffel ancestor—remains a lightweight, simple piece of luggage.

Unlike the locker-room variant, though, the Combo Bag provides its own means of support via a pair of 19-inch bungee cords, which run through two lengthwise loops on the bottom of the bag. And when you're not using the bungees, the cords' hooks tuck into pockets on the bag's underside; it's a convenient system the duffel can't match. In the case of the Combo Bag, however, that convenience doesn't extend to every motorcycle. Like most seat-mounted bags, the success of its fit largely depends on the bike, and that's especially true if the motorcycle has a narow saddle. Then the nylon tubes holding the bungee cords tend to bunch up, providing a load platform only as wide as the seat. That condition leaves much of the bag's weight unsupported over the edges of the saddle, and consequently allows its contents to shift annoyingly.

Yet even with a broad saddle, partial loads can move about inside the bag. And that shortcoming stems from insufficient internal support. The bag's material is thin, and when only partially filled with almost anything other than light clothing, the foam stiffeners aren't robust enough to keep the load—and the bag—upright, allowing the contents to shift about. But when solidly filled with lighter objects, such as a weekend's clothes, the Combo Bag remains relatively secure.

Still, hauling a weekend's laundry is only part of the bag's worth. For example, the retail price is a paltry $29.95, making the Combo Bag a screaming deal, especially when compared to some of the pricey soft luggage available. Moreover, the Combo Bag retains the same features that made the duffel so appealing: a versatility that allows it to tote almost anything, along with a simplicity that means you can merely pack it, strap it on and *go*. With the Combo Bag, then, the duffel hasn't just gotten older; it's gotten better. —*Marc Cook*

Vetter Bagman Combo Bag
Manufacturer: Vetter Products Inc., Dept. CG, Rantoul, Illinois 61866.
Suggested retail price: $29.95
Available color: black with red trim

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 VIC HUBER

Combo Bag offers simple bungee-cord mounting, multi-role versatility and light weight

Keeping alive the traits that made the duffel bag famous—including a low price—yet adding modern features.

OFF-ROAD

Monthly Proof that Man Does Not Live by Tarmac Alone

Off-Road Boots On Road

• Although English motorcyclists suffer from a shortage of off-road riding areas, the popularity of off-road boots is as big

© 1985 DAVID DEWHURST

as all outdoors in the United Kingdom. In fact, *street* riders have taken a fancy to wearing such boots because of the increased protection they offer, and it's not uncommon to see street-strafers wearing a set of bulky—yet warm and water resistant—enduro boots. As one of the roadriding blokes aptly put it, "It's almost always raining and cold over here; it's the best way to keep your feet dry and warm."

—Dain Gingerelli

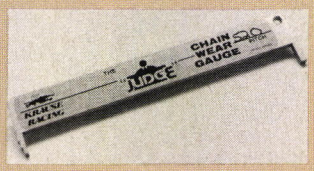
PRODUCT EVALUATION: Judge Chain Wear Gauge

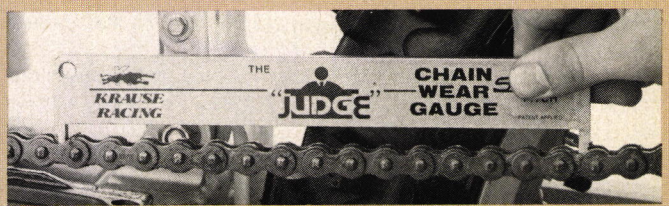
Judge and jury, all in one.

• To a motorcyclist, chain wear is as certain as bugs and dirty air filters. That's especially true for off-road bikes, which get a constant diet of sand, mud and grit; abrasives that soak up even the most tenacious lube, and mean a death sentence for a chain. And, despite the many theories on how to gauge chain wear, there's one certain way to do so: measuring the chain's length. But for most riders, that's a dirty, time-consuming task that's easy to ignore.

Krause Racing's Judge Chain Wear Gauge, though, can transform the job into a quick, relatively clean operation. A simple go/no-go gauge, one end of the heat-treated, 7075-T6 aluminum Judge fits between the rollers of your chain, and the other end drops into one of three steps. According to Krause Racing, the first step indicates the chain is in new condition and "not guilty." If the second step drops in, the chain is halfway through its service life and "on probation." But if the third step drops in, that represents a 1 percent increase in length; the Judge finds your chain guilty of sprocket abuse in the first degree, and recommends a life sentence in the nearest trash can.

Most chain manufacturers will tell you a chain is still usable at 1 percent wear, though, but past that point it causes a dramatic acceleration in sprocket wear. That's where the Judge's worth comes in to play, because by replacing the chain when the Judge delivers its guilty verdict, you'll reduce the risk of ruining sprockets with a badly worn chain. And that means you won't have to face the even harder, dirtier task of replacing the sprockets as often.





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On the other hand, you'll be using more chains per set of sprockets; it's a trade-off where you'll be spending your money. Still, it's a far easier task to replace a chain than it is to install a chain *and* new sprockets. And the Judge offers a way to keep an eye on chain wear one step at a time; that's something you can be certain of. Court adjourned.

—Mike Gillies

Manufacturer: Krause Racing, Dept CG, 111 Fairbanks, Adison, Illinois 60101
Suggested retail price: $10.95–$13.95
Available sizes: 420, 428, 520, 525, 530, 630

Ego? What Ego?

• Motocross star Rick Johnson will do almost anything to win a race—or to get attention. For example, at the Superbowl of Motocross, held May 11 in the Los Angeles Coliseum, RJ took on a new nickname—"Magic" Johnson. When Larry Huffman, the race announcer, asked about the new alias, Johnson replied, "Well, the best basketball player is Magic (Marcus) Johnson, so I figure the best in motocross should be called Magic, too."

—Dain Gingerelli

Continued

Tempus Fugit

• Check your watch. By most methods of timekeeping, be it EST, PST, MST or GMT, it's drawing near to the two-thirds mark for 1985. By one particular timetable, however, ATC, it's already 1986. Honda has gone on record with its '86-model ATVs, and as you might expect, last year's dipping of the toe into the Suzuki-dominated four-wheeler genre was followed by a wholehearted splash for 1986.

As a matter of fact, out of a lineup of 12 ATVs for the new model-year, five are four-wheeled. But the Odyssey isn't one of the five; following a year in which Odysseys were plagued with reported transmission failures and engine seizures, Honda sidelined the model for some redesign. Gone, too, are the ATC70 and 110, victims of poor sales. The ATC70's engine lives on, though, in what promises to be a tiddler's delight, the TRX70. Both the TRX125 and 250 return with minor changes, and are joined by new four-wheelers in 200cc and 350cc displacements. The 200SX has a new 199cc motor with five forward speeds plus reverse, is fully suspended and has an air-intake snorkel and crankcase breather built into its tube frame. New it is, but the 200 likely will be pushed out of the spotlight by the biggest TRX, the 350 4x4, first of the four-wheel-drive ATVs. The 350 features shaft-drive, front and rear, and its full-time 4WD driveline also has a torque-sensing limited-slip differential in front. The trick, apparently, is to find someplace the TRX350 4x4 *won't* go.

On the three-wheeled side of things, Big Red, the ATC200S, 350X, and 250SX are all back in recognizable form. Honda's racing ATC, the 250R, returns as well, minus ATAC, but with a tapered, box-section swingarm, lighter wheels and a top end that can be swapped for a CR250's—provided you supply the exhaust pipe. The more general-purpose 125M has a new motor and computer-designed frame, automatic cam-chain tensioner, a five-speed transmission with reverse, and is now the smallest three-wheeler in Honda's line. The last of the '86 ATCs, the 200X, has a new chassis and suspension, and shares its 199cc engine with the TRX200SX, but has a six-speed gearbox.

Three-wheelers still dominate Honda's ATV lineup, then. But with the TRXs it's obvious that while Honda didn't start the four-wheel trend, the company isn't wasting any time in capitalizing on it. And, speaking of time: Even though 1986 is upon us a little early this year, don't bother to set your clocks ahead. Apparently, if you're on ATC time, it's always time to ride.

—Larry Works

Star Tradition

• There's a tradition in enduro racing—one almost as old as burning a checkpoint—that enduro machinery is basically motocross equipment one or two years after the fact, with lights and an odometer tacked on for good measure. The latest M-Star enduro hardware has pitched that tradition out with yesterday's bathwater, though. The M-Star GME500 has the requisite enduro accoutrements, true, but it also shares its frame, Ohlins single-shock rear suspension, Brembo front disc brake and 488cc, 61-horsepower, five-speed engine with its *current* motocross counterpart. To ready it for enduro use, the E-type has lights, a disc brake cover, a wide rear fender, a spark arrestor and a speedometer with resettable tripmeter. So much for traditions, it seems—except for the tradition of winning.

—Larry Works

ATV TEST:

Honda ATC350X

Success through excess.

BY MARC COOK

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 MIKE PONS

• Honda had a problem with its ATC200X, a dilemma resulting directly from the 200's enormous popularity. Since its introduction, the 200X had captured the hearts and throttle-hands of ATV riders, because it offered most of the up-to-date items found on Honda's racing ATC250R, but featured a docile four-stroke powerplant instead of the 250R's hyperactive two-stroke. Still, many 200X owners wanted more power, albeit without the two-stroke's peakiness. Honda listened to those riders and went about building a bigger and faster—yet still docile—four-stroke ATC. The result is the ATC350X, an all-new Open-class three-wheel thumper that provides a substantial increase in raw, berm-busting horsepower over the 200X.

In fact, the 350X's level of power makes it one of the fastest, most hard-charging four-stroke ATVs to roost sand, one capable of prodigious speeds for a recreational three-wheeler. But the 350's impressive power is tractable, too, and strongly biased toward low-end and mid-range punch, so that even a novice can use it. And that style of power aids the ATC in virtually every riding situation, allowing the 350.4cc four-valve motor to rocket the 350X out of sandy berms from absurdly low rpm.

Such tractability was one of the goals Honda's engineers aimed for when they started designing the 350 engine. And to achieve that goal, they built an entirely new motor, one that shares virtually no parts with Honda's XR350, not even the XR's RFVC radial-valve head. Instead, the 350X uses a conventional pent-roof four-valve combustion chamber because, Honda says, the added cost and complexity of the RFVC design—one that primarily benefits top-end power—wouldn't be worth the effort in a motor tuned for low-end torque.

The same aim—low-end power production—prompted Honda to fit the 350X with an unusual twin-valve carburetor. In the 350X's 31mm Keihin carb, a linkage system connects a conventional slide valve to a butterfly-type throttle valve downstream. The butterfly opens slightly before the slide does, and Honda claims the arrangement offers better low-speed carburetion than a slide-valve carb. The 350X's performance bears out that claim, too, with crisp throttle response from subterranean-level revs.

That snappy response aids the 350X's low-speed steering, too, by allowing you to steer with the throttle; simply whacking the throttle open breaks the rear tires loose. And considering the 350's robust size and scale-straining 324-pound weight, a motor with instant-on low-end power is positively mandatory for those rock-dodging maneuvers. You'll still notice the Honda's substantial tonnage at every turn, but the big ATC presents remarkably good turning manners at low speeds.

At higher speeds, though, the 350 reveals steering characteristics similar to those of smaller ATCs: You have to throw your weight to the inside and lean hard on the throttle to make the 350 turn. In that respect, the Honda's weight isn't too noticeable, and the X feels reluctant to change direction only in rapid transitions. Nonetheless, the ATC *does* require a great deal of effort to initiate a slide, even with the motor's excellent off-idle response. And part of the blame can be traced to the 350X's tall-profile balloon tires, which simply don't slide as easily as the lower-profile tires found on the latest three-wheel racers. The low-pressure tires also work against the 350's suspension, because they offer a few inches of relatively undamped suspension travel, and in rough terrain they make the ATC bounce from rock to rock.

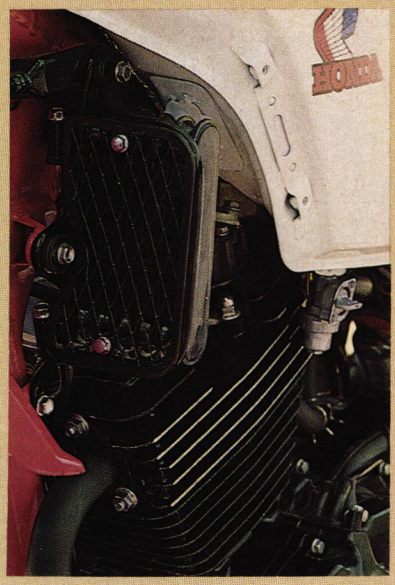
Otherwise, though, the Honda's suspension does a good job. Both the fork and damping-

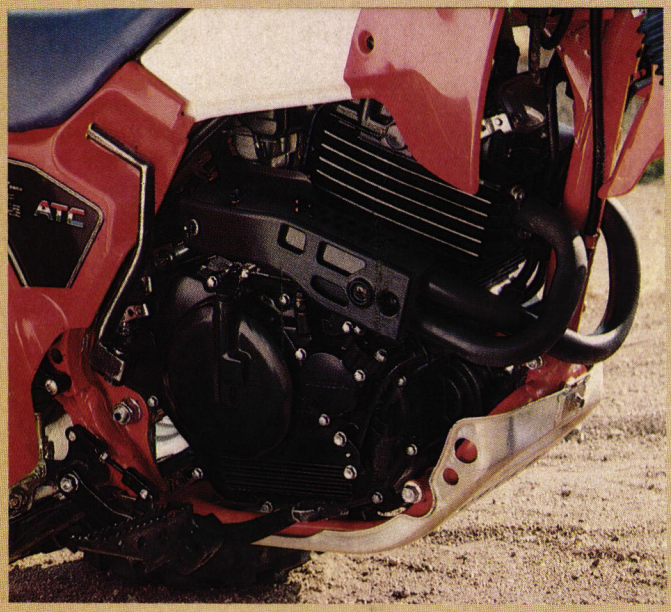
Continued

adjustable single rear shock are set up fairly soft, and provide a supple ride over most terrain. But that doesn't mean the Honda falls to its knees in rough going; only the most brutal landings cause the suspension to bottom. And at high speeds, the suspension feels well balanced and confidence-inspiring.

Less confidence inspiring is the Honda's touchy rear brake, which undermines the 350's high-speed aspirations somewhat. Occasionally, the hydraulic rear disc brake locks abruptly, and refuses to unlock unless the brake is completely released. On the other hand, the 350X's twin-piston-caliper front brake—similar to the ATC250R's—works well, providing tremendous power and good feel.

But when you've got the ATC350X pitched into a full-lock slide, with its lusty thumper motor churning out a satisfying well of torque, flaws like the Honda's touchy rear brake simply fade from view. And it's the Honda's wonderful four-stroke engine that makes the ATC350X such a delight to ride: With its impressive low-end grunt and spot-on carburetion, the 350X's powerplant is an ideal Open-class ATV motor. In short, the 350X retains all the virtures of the 200X, only with the specifications—size, power and sheer grip-clenching speed—moved up the scale several notches. That's precisely what power-hungry ATV riders wanted, and would seem to prove that in ATV's, bigger *is* better. ●





HONDA ATC350X

Importer: American Honda Motor Co. Inc.
100 W. Alondra Blvd.
Gardena, California 90247

Category	ATV
Suggested retail price	$2248
Engine type	four-stroke vertical single
Valve arrangement	single overhead camshaft, four valves
Bore and stroke	81.0mm x 68.0mm
Displacement	350.4cc
Compression ratio	8.5:1
Carburetion	one 34mm Keihin slide/needle
Gearbox	6-speed
Front fork/wheel travel	Showa air spring, 35mm stanchion tube diameter/8.0 in. (204mm)
Rear shock/wheel travel	Showa, 17-position adjustable compression damping, 4-position adjustable rebound damping, 7mm spring preload range/7.0 in. (177mm)
Weight	324 lbs. (147.0kg)
Wheelbase	49.6 to 50.6 in. (1261 to 1286mm)
Seat height	30.0 in. (761mm)
Steering head angle	23.0 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail	1.4 in. (35mm)
Top speed (observed)	55 mph (88kph)
Warranty	six months, unlimited mileage
Available color	red only

SPORT LINES

Cycle Guide's True Tales of Racecourses, Dark Horses and Machines at Speed

BY DAIN GINGERELLI

Yanks In Europe—Part II

One dynasty ends, and another begins.

• It probably won't go down in archeological records, but when Frenchman Christian Sarron won the German Grand Prix on May 19, he caused the downfall of a dynasty; a dynasty forged, led and sustained by American riders. Sarron's victory broke a winning streak dating back to Sept. 5, 1982, a day that saw the first of 27 consecutive 500cc Grand Prix wins by American roadracers.

Sarron was one of racing's most unlikely candidates to end the First American Dynasty, too. This is his first full season in the 500cc class, and even though his credentials include a world championship in the intensely competitive 250cc class, the wiry Frenchman wasn't considered to be winning material on a 500, and certainly not fast enough to topple the reigning Americans. Sarron's riding style contrasts sharply with the brash, aggressive approach the Americans have perfected, too. He rides smoothly through corners, appearing to glide past apexes as if his racebike were on a cushion of air, whereas the Americans' technique allows them to steer their 140-horsepower bikes with the *rear* tire, sliding around—not merely riding through—the turns.

Continued

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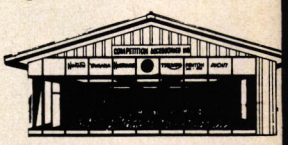

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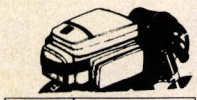

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Randy Mamola belongs to the Dynasty

But he hasn't ruled it yet.

Honda's refined NSR500 vee-four is faster this year

Making it tough for anyone to beat Fast Freddie Spencer.

But Sarron proved he *can* win in the 500 class without sliding. And his equalizer came in the form of rain. Indeed, some consider Sarron to be a magician on two wheels in wet weather, and he put his skills to work at the German Grand Prix when he took his Yamaha YZR500 past Freddie Spencer on the 12th lap to take the lead, and ultimately the win. It was Sarron's third race on the YZR.

Sarron knew even before the race started that the rain would work to his advantage, too. "I know I can't beat the Americans when it is dry, so I must wait for it to rain," he said afterward. By the time the checkered flag appeared, he had a 12-second lead over second-place Spencer, while Englishman Ron Haslam was third and Eddie Lawson was fourth.

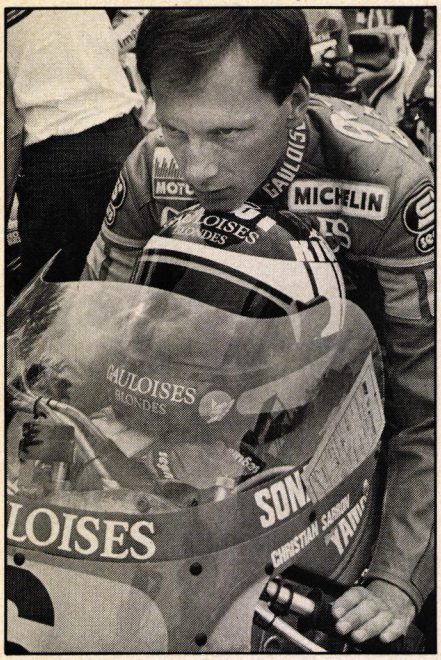
Actually, the American dynasty might have rolled on unchallenged had Spencer and Lawson chosen the same tire compound that Sarron did. Instead, the Americans selected a softer compound Michelin than Sarron's, and by the end of the race the Yanks' tires were worn clear to the cords. Spencer and Lawson later told horror stories about sliding sideways everywhere

Eddie Lawson was down 6 mph at Mugello

His Yamaha couldn't top Spencer's NSR.

Sarron (6) leads Mamola (2) and Englishman Ron Haslam (5) at Italy.

Sunny skies made Sarron feel unwelcome, and he finished fifth.



Christian Sarron prefers wet weather

So he can sail in front of the Yanks.

on the track, even while accelerating down the main straight. It was remarkable that they even finished.

Even so, neither rider made excuses for losing—the first time an American had not won a 500 GP in almost three years. As Lawson recalled the following week, "He (Sarron) outrode us in the wet, that's all there is to it." Lawson figured he could get his revenge at the Italian GP, though. On the Mugello track, with its off-camber and downhill turns, he could ride his Yamaha the way he preferred—sliding. Sarron—or anybody for that matter—would have to ride hard to stay with the vee-fours of Lawson and Spencer there. The Frenchman knew it, too. After qualifying fourth at the Italian GP, behind Spencer, Raymond Roche and Lawson, Sarron said, "I am not out to win today. This is not my kind of track. There are too many turns, and I do not hang off like the Americans. I am just out for points."

Sarron, then, wasn't destined to start a new, French dynasty on the remains of the American one. And Roche, Sarron's fellow countryman, erased any chance of that happening when he crashed his YZR500 in Saturday's final practice session and injured his ankle. That incident reduced the favorites for Sunday's race to Spencer and Lawson. If the Americans finished, everyone figured, then the race would be for third place. Roche *did* manage to line up for the start on Sunday, but he was in no shape to challenge Spencer or Lawson. The start of the Second American Dynasty was about the begin.

It didn't take long for Spencer to take command. He followed teammate Haslam around for a lap, then put his Rothmans-Honda NSR500 in the lead for good. Meanwhile, Lawson slashed through the pack into second after a typically slow start.

Continued

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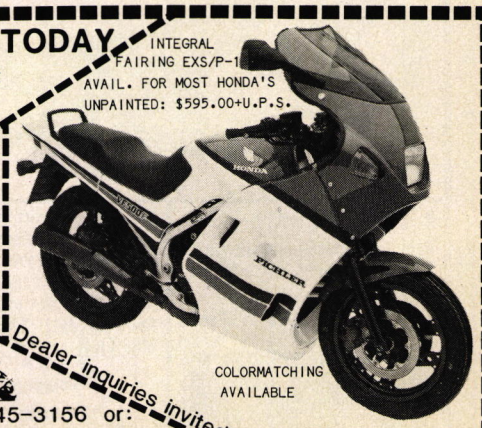

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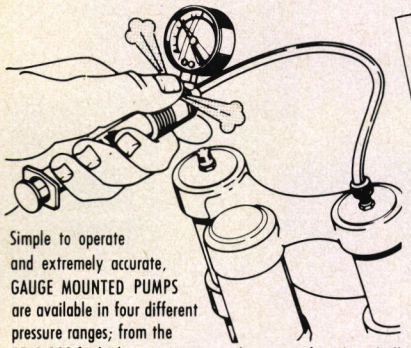

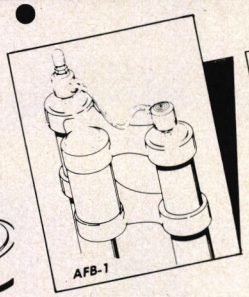

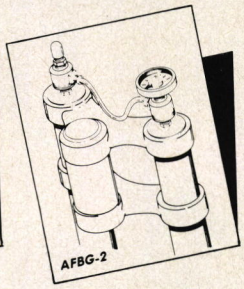

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Australian Wayne Gardner after a crash

Praise be, I survived another one.

There, he planned his strategy. Because Spencer's Honda was about 6 mph faster on top, Lawson figured on waiting patiently, in the hope that Spencer would push hard enough to use up his Honda's tires. "Freddie usually selects a softer compound tire than me, and he wears them out," Lawson said before the race. "So if I catch him, it will be then."

On lap five, it looked as if Lawson's prophecy would come true. Spencer had just apexed the Correntaio, a 50-mph downhill righthander, when his rear tire broke loose. Fast Freddie kicked out his foot, correcting for the slide, and as a plume of blue smoke billowed from his rear tire, he countersteered the clip-on bars and kept himself upright. From that point on, though, the Honda appeared skittish through the turns, and Lawson narrowed the gap to about five seconds. But whatever he made up through Mugello's twisty back section, Spencer was able to pull back on the long front straight, where his NSR500 could stretch its legs, using its additional 6 mph to good advantage.

Finally, Spencer won, with Lawson second. Sarron was way back in fifth, behind the Honda vee-threes of Australian Wayne Gardner and Randy Mamola. And so the Second American Dynasty was started by the man who formed the first one nearly three years ago. But exactly who will reign in the new kingdom is still undecided. Spencer and Lawson traded wins at the following two races, with Spencer taking Austria, and Lawson putting his Yamaha in front at Yugoslavia. At the half-way point of the season, Spencer enjoyed a slim seven-point lead.

One thing's for certain: The crown will go

Where It All Began

• Although the First American Dynasty started in late 1982, the American invasion of Europe actually began five years earlier. It was then that two Americans, Pat Hennen and Steve Baker, started the trend that continues to this day.

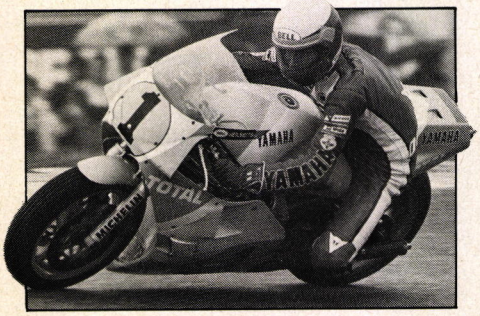
Hennen, riding an RG500 for Heron-Suzuki, got the ball rolling in 1977 when he won the 500 class at the British Grand Prix. The following year he won the Spanish GP, followed by Kenny Roberts' string of three victories in a row—the Austrian, French and Italian rounds—on the way to his first world title.

But Roberts' initial world championship in '78 wasn't the first international roadrace title held by an American. Steve Baker, riding a works Yamaha TZ750, won the Formula 750 class the previous year. Unfortunately for Baker, Yamaha didn't renew his contract for 1978. Instead, Yamaha sent Roberts to Europe, where he promptly won three consecutive world championships. *—Dain Gingerelli*

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1985 BARBARA JOHNS

1977 F750 World Champion, Steve Baker

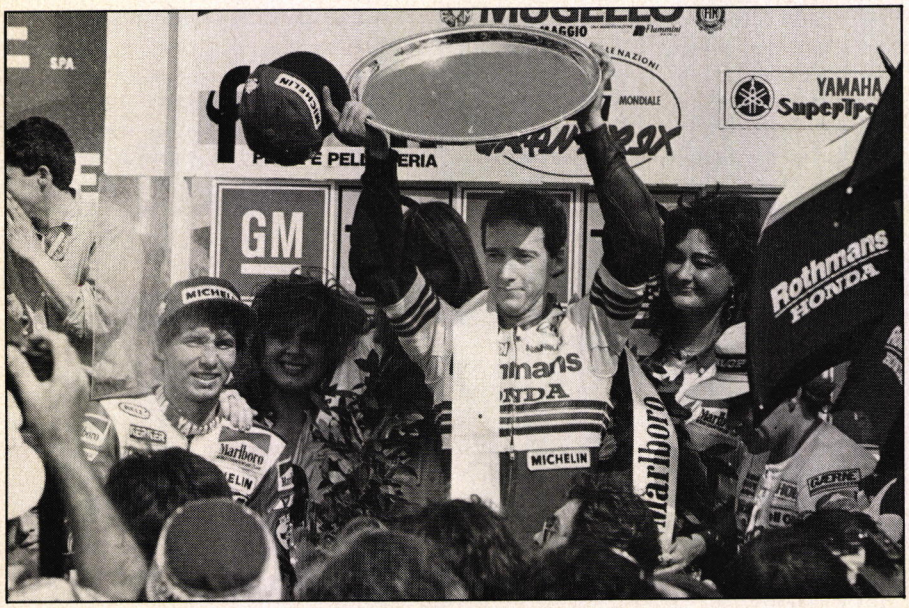
Roberts was America's next king.



Lawson had tire problems at Germany

Just slinging in the rain.

to Spencer or Lawson. Not only are they the fastest riders on the circuit, but they have the fastest bikes, too. At this point in the new dynasty, it appears that the only way the Americans can lose a Grand Prix is if it rains on raceday. And even then it will be tough to beat them. Because Lawson and Spencer learned a valuable lesson in tire selection on May 19. That lesson will cut short Sarron's advantage in the wet, and virtually guarantee that one of the two Americans will win the world championship. The Second Dynasty will be intact—at least for one more season. •



Freddie Spencer and Eddie Lawson finished first and second in Italy

Order was restored to the World Championship, and a new dynasty began.

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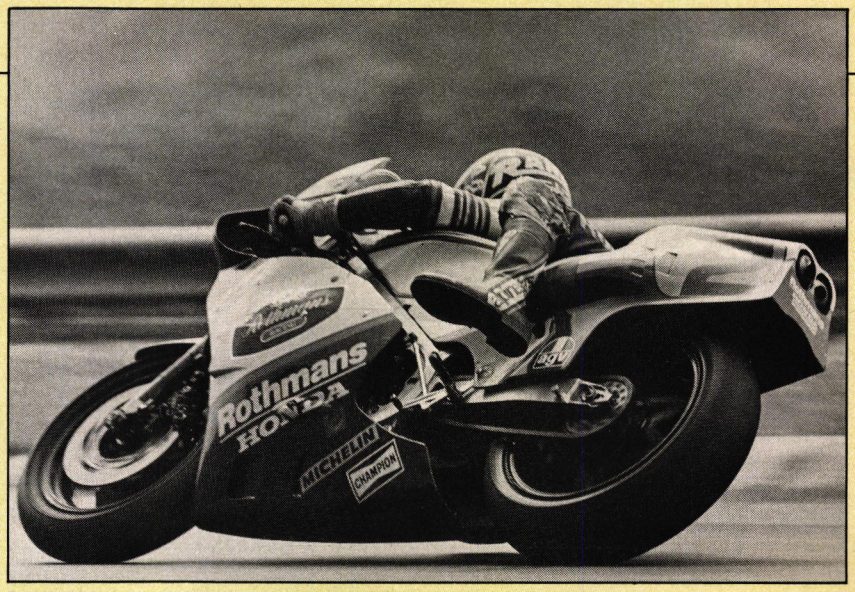


PHOTOGRAPHY © DAVID DEWHURST

Randy Mamola won't be hanging off his NS500 Honda as radically anymore

He put his foot down, and made the decision to change last June.

• Hanging out with Mamola: Rothmans-Honda teamster Randy Mamola has one of the most unorthodox riding styles of any racer on the GP circuit, often with his outside foot well off the footpeg through corners. But he's out to change that. He said that hanging off as far as he does makes it difficult sometimes to execute quick transitions through the turns. So he intends to, as he said, "try and keep both feet on the footpegs" when hanging off from now on.

• Seeing double: Freddie Spencer and Wayne Rainey share an uncommon distinction: They've both taken 250cc and 500cc roadrace wins on the same day. In fact, Spencer has *two* doubleheader wins to his credit this season, including the Italian and Austrian 250 and 500 Grands Prix. Rainey's twin-bill wins (Formula 1 and F2 aboard MacLean Racing's Hondas) highlighted the AMA Elkhart Lake National, June 9.

• Ghosts of doubles past: The last time a rider won world championship races in both the 250cc and 500cc classes on the same day was in 1973, when Finnish rider Jarno Saarinen did the deed at the Austrian and French GPs. And the last time a rider won GPs in the 250cc and 500cc classes during the same season was in 1978; Kenny Roberts took the Venezuelan and Dutch GPs in the 250 class, and the Austrian, French, Italian and British GPs in the 500.

• Blame it on Rio: There's talk of a Brazilian Grand Prix for 1986. According to sources in the FIM, a group in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, wants to have a Grand Prix at the Jacurepauga circuit, which is also the site of the Brazil Grand Prix of automobile racing.

• Don't Roche me: Raymond Roche, Team Marlboro rider, is gaining a reputation this year as a crasher, in part because once the French rider climbs aboard his Marlboro-Yamaha YZR500, he rides all-out. That kind of do-or-die effort has paid off in spectacular lap times, but it also has put him on the ground more than once. While practicing for the Italian GP at Mugello, May 25, for example, Roche passed his teammate Eddie Lawson, and then fell, totaling his YZR; Roche escaped with an injured ankle. "It was exciting (to watch)," said Lawson afterward. And Freddie Spencer had this to say of Roche's endo: "If there's an orange scrape mark on the pavement, I know it's a Marlboro guy."

• Not Eddie, though: Although Spencer might be able to detect a Marlboro bike's passage by the paint it leaves on the pavement, there's little chance of it belonging to Eddie Lawson. The defending world champion has finished every Grand Prix he's entered since joining the circuit in 1983. In the process, Steady Eddie has won six races and one world championship. That's an especially impressive record when you consider the intensity of Grand Prix racing.

• Lawson and Yamaha break: There have been persistent rumors this year that Yamaha won't renew Lawson's contract for 1985. Don't count on it, though, because despite the rift between Lawson and Giacomo Agostini, Marlboro-Yamaha team manager, there's little chance that Yamaha would let Lawson slip away to another team in 1986. Basically, Lawson doesn't like the way Agostini is handling the team's financial matters, and if rumors are correct, neither does Yamaha, or Marlboro, for that matter. What will happen? Speculation favors former three-time world champion Kenny Roberts forming his own Yamaha team. It's no secret that Marlboro wants to hop on any bandwagon with Roberts, and a move of that sort would solve many problems. If KR assumes control, figure on Kel Carruthers bringing his magical wrenches to the team, and Lawson being joined by Wayne Rainey.

• Heron-Suzuki in a pinch: The Heron-Suzuki Grand Prix team, sponsored by Skoal Bandit, a subsidiary of the U.S. Tobacco Co., currently is just a one-bike effort, with Englishman Rob McElnea its rider. But Gary Taylor of Heron said the team has a budget for two riders next year. Randy Mamola, Wayne Gardner, and even Eddie Lawson are names that have been discussed as new members of the Heron team.

• Ken-san, No. 1 in Japan: To understand just how popular Kenny Roberts is in Japan, consider this: One Japanese motorcycle magazine printed a story last spring that KR *might* ride the Suzuka Eight Hour endurance race. In the story, the author suggested that readers write or call Yamaha and ask the Iwata-based company to put Roberts in the saddle of an FZR750 at Suzuka. To that end, according to Roberts, Yamaha received more than 2000 letters a day. So Roberts agreed to ride, teaming with Tadahiko Taira on an FZR750 backed by Taira's sponsor, Tech 21.

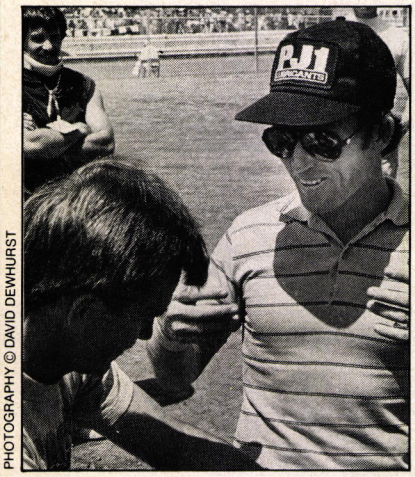
• Flat out with Roberts: Another Japanese magazine article related Roberts' mini-bike exploits with Wayne Rainey at Roberts' home-built racetrack. It seems that Roberts and Rainey have been play-racing on KR's backyard track in their off-time, and the Japanese press interpreted the affair as a lesson for Rainey on how to slide a racebike. And the result of that story was that Japanese riders wanted to ride with KR, too. In fact, Roberts said so many Japanese racers have asked to visit his track near Modesto, California, that he is considering offering a flattracker's school for them this winter.

• Stroh's, Springfield and Shobert: Honda's Bubba Shobert won the Stroh's Springfield Mile, May 26, his third consecutive Mile victory this season. Runner-up Ted Boody, also on a Honda, kept his 1985 Mile record intact, too, by finishing second for the third time in a row. The following Saturday at the Louisville Half-Mile, Boody finished second again, putting him—you guessed it—second in the CPS standings, 91 to Shoberts's 102.

Winners & Losers

Roberts On Dirt

He'll race a Mile, if you pay him.



PHOTOGRAPHY © DAVID DEWHURST

Kenny Roberts at San Jose last May

Preparing for the September race?

• It's almost unthinkable, but Kenny Roberts, perhaps the greatest motorcycle racer ever, can't find a sponsor. Roberts, it seems, would like to go Mile racing one more time. He has a bike (Harley-Davidson XR750), a tuner (Mert Lawwill), and the desire (something Roberts has *always* had) to return to racing, but his team, Roberts-Lawwill Racing, lacks a major sponsor. And given Roberts' undeniable talent, it's a sin that nobody wants to invest in his race program.

"I'd have no problems getting a sponsor in Europe," Roberts said, "because the press over there gives good coverage to racers. But here, it's another story." The problem, he says, is convincing a company to invest money in a flattrack race program, with no guarantee that there will be *American* magazine and television support of the racing.

For now, though, R-L Racing has help from PJ1 Oil, Tsubaki Chain and, of all things, Corin, the largest motorcycle accessory shop in Tokyo, Japan. And, surprisingly enough, Roberts also has the blessings of the company that's employed him since 1972: Yamaha. "My contract with Yamaha allows me to ride a Harley-Davidson," he said. But *only* a Harley-Davidson—not a Honda, cur-

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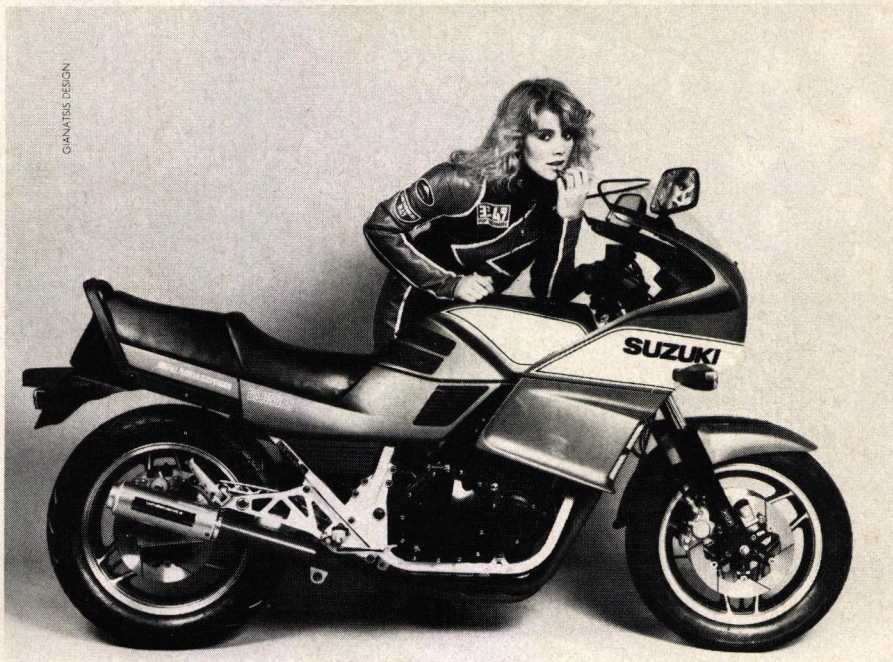

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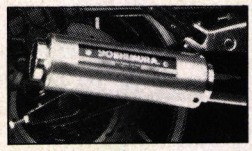

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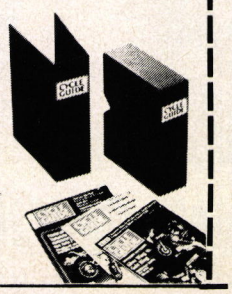

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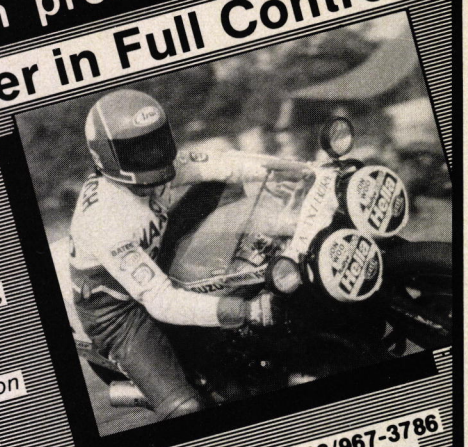

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rently the most successful bike for Camel Pro Series Mile racing. "I can't go that far," he added. Ironically, riding an XR750 puts Roberts in the same situation he faced when he rode a Yamaha eight years ago: the XR750, King of the Mile in the '70s, now takes a backseat to Honda's RS750. So, once again, Roberts must assume the underdog role.

Still, the R-L Racing XR750 showed its potential at the Springfield Mile, May 26, when Wayne Rainey qualified second on it behind Ricky Graham's RS750. Rainey, who raced a TZ250 for Team Roberts in Europe last year, has stayed on with Roberts as a development rider for the XR. Rainey is no stranger to flattracking, either; he got his start in motorcycle racing on the dirt, becoming a roadrace specialist only in the past four years. And even though it's been several years since he's raced a Miler, he's adjusted well. Riding a flattracker has other rewards for Rainey, too. As Roberts pointed out, the high-speed sliding "helps him (Rainey) with his roadracing."

But the real attraction is seeing KR in action again. And if R-L Racing enlists a sponsor before the Sept. 15 San Jose Mile, Roberts intends to race a similarly-prepared XR750 there. Which poses the obvious question: Can Roberts readjust to dirttrack riding, especially high-speed Mile racing? After all, the last time he raced on the dirt—other than in two Houston TTs and Shorttracks—was in 1977. "I rode our's (XR750) during a test session at San Jose last May. I found leg muscles (from sliding) that I haven't used in a long time," he said. Still, Roberts put in some respectable lap times during the testing, and he figures his roadracing during the past eight years has helped maintain an edge for sliding on dirt. "I'm so used to high speeds (from roadracing) that getting used to Mile racing won't be a problem," he said.

Instead, the problem is in finding a sponsor. And if Roberts does find one, all he has to do is head to San Jose for the Sept. 15 Mile, race, and then head back home. Because, you see, Roberts intends to ride the XR only in one event. "I only care about racing San Jose," he said. All it will take to get him there is money. But even if a sponsor doesn't step forward, and the collection plate remains bare, don't think for a minute that Roberts won't compete again. Already he's committed to teaming with Yamaha's Tadahiko Taira for the eight-hour Suzuka endurance race, and he'll also ride Taira's YZR500 at Laguna Seca in July. Because when it comes to Kenny Roberts, the only real sin is *really* retiring. —*Dain Gingerelli* •

LETTERS *Armstrong amiss, 'class' of 55 and siding with Suzuki*

CAMOUFLAGED ISSUE

In the July 1985 issue, the Ninja is tested as the fastest; the Suzuki the quickest ("Speed Wars III: The Saga Continues"). On the cover, you have a photograph of the Honda VF1000R and right above it the words "The fastest streetbike in the world!"

Your magazine is displayed on newsstands, checkstands and other places where people can walk by and glance at your cover. It is assumed then that the Honda is the fastest streetbike in the world. The Kawasaki and the Suzuki won the "war," not the Honda. Nice work.

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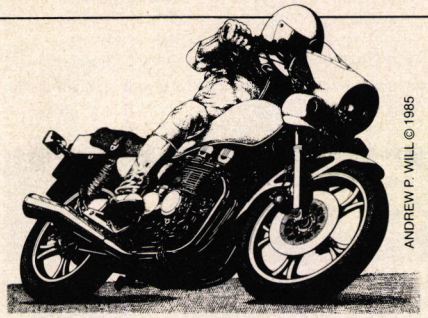
A free society doesn't mean suspension of all laws. To be preserved, freedom sometimes must be curtailed, and laws forced on us; public interest overrules selfish freedom of choice.

Some bikers see freedom as complete disregard for others' rights. But we all pay it. Already-high insurance rates will



soar as motorcycle injuries and fatalities continue an upsurge; it won't pay to own a motorcycle. Using such logic to eliminate all laws, public places also should have freedom to deny these bikers access.

Frankly, a motorcycle is a rapid-moving accident seeking a place to occur. It's not only risky but serious business to all citizens. The IQs of some of the replies don't even have a numerical value.

55 Club
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

And all this time we thought the 55 Club referred to the speed limit—ed.

TO PROTECT AND TO SERVE

I'm a cop, or a pig if you want. Is Armstrong for real? If so, he's right on! The bikies act scared even in gangs. They wear all those charms on their jackets, ride stretched out bikes and dressers with chrome and Christmas tree lights. They all say,"Look at us, man, we are big man bikers. Be careful, don't hurt us."

As primarily a car driver, I find it distracting to see those bobbing, blinking lights. Drivers see dogs, little kids on bicycles and joggers, all in the street night and day—no lights! And bikes cry for cycle awareness. What do they think, drivers are blind? The next time I see a bike light in the daytime coming at me, I'll write every ticket I can think of for him.

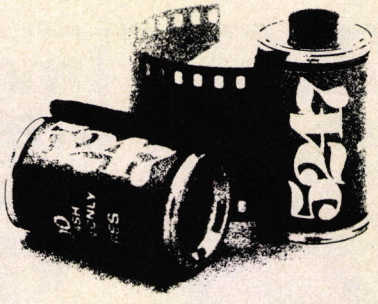
L.D.
Chicago, Illinois

Fortunately, with a mind like yours, he'll get off easy—ed.

WHODUNIT?

In the July 1985 issue, there was a dumb letter supposedly written by me. I did not write it. I first heard about it in a phone call from a person, who laughed and told me to look in the magazine. Then an angry biker called complaining about the letter, so I looked and there it was. *Continued*

35mm Color



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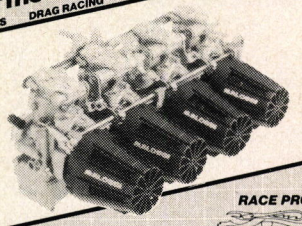
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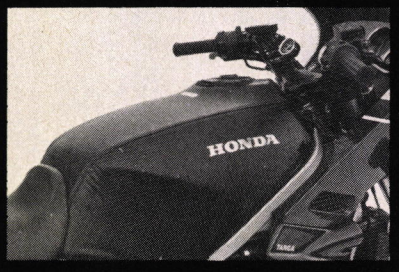

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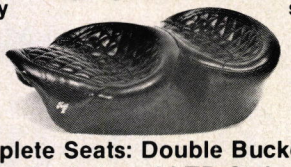
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LETTERS *Continued*

It does not reflect my views and seems designed to discredit me. It may have been a bad joke by some acquaintance, perhaps the first caller. To attack bikers as that letter did is not my style. I apologize sincerely to all bikers, especially the one who called.

Ed Armstrong
Fox River Grove, Illinois

TOUR DE FARCE

I just read your road test on the Suzuki Cavalcade in the August 1985 issue. Did your test riders even ride the bike? They were obviously opinionated before they wrote the article, or they're on Honda's payroll.

I'd think you would be embarrassed by this article after the other magazines had such favorable tests on the same bike. I think you should take a second look at the Cavalcade and do a more objective and unbiased test.

Doug Barcharsk
Pittsburg, Kansas

We already did; it's the other magazines we're concerned about—ed.

RAISING A STINK

Your 1986 Suzuki Cavalcade test is fair in many respects but lacks a touring rider's point of view.

The Cavalcade is almost perfect for my size. As for heat, your lower fairing vents must have been open; mine is much cooler than my old Aspencade. A manufacturer should pay attention to passenger comfort; most people who tour do so as couples. Who gives a tinker's damn about pegs dragging? I bought mine to tour, not crash corners.

The Ride Reviews stink; Jerry, Larry and Jim have as much business doing those as I would testing a V-Max. Suzuki gave the bike to a trio of canyon-crashing sport cyclists. Keep your juvenile comments about "charisma of white bread," jodhpurs and "push-button whoopie cushions." Touring riders want facts.

Tom Ackerman
Las Vegas, Nevada

FULL-DRESSED CHOICE

I agree with most of your road test of the Suzuki Cavalcade, but there are some points that could have been made.

Suzuki needs to upgrade the latch on the dummy tank lid; any thief with a fingernail file or screwdriver could pop it open. My wife loved the air-cushion backrest and seat but thought there should be another down position for the footpegs. The Cavalcade is a close third behind Honda and Yamaha, yet I think we'll see a lot of them. Because if your passenger wears the pants in the family, she will demand the Suzuki.

Rick Winfield
Tulsa, Oklahoma

All letters must include the writer's name and address. Letters will be edited for length. Due to the volume of mail received, we regret we are unable to give personal responses. ●

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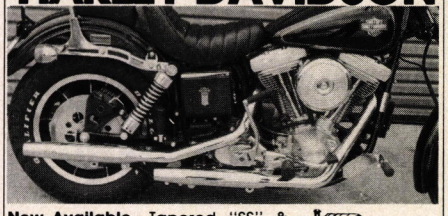

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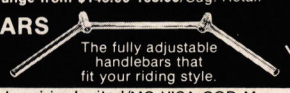

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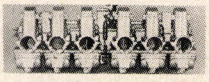
MasterCard  VISA

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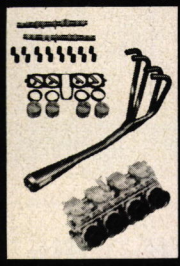

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